No White 100

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS:

WRITTEN PARTLY ON SUNDRY OF THE MORE *DIFFICULT PASSAGES* IN THE

SACRED VOLUME.

BY REV. ANDREW LEE, A. M.
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"I KNOW BUT ONE BOOK, THAT CAN JUSTIFY OUR IMPLICIT ACQUIESCENCE IN IT; AND ON THAT BOOK, A NOBLE DISDAIN OF UNDUE DEFERANCE TO PRIOR OPINION—CASTS NEW AND INESTIMABLE LIGHT."—*Young.*

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PREFACE.

THAT thick darkneſs overſpread the church after the irruptions of the northern barbarians, and the deſolations which they occaſioned in the Roman empire, is known and acknowledged. Thoſe conquerors profeſſed the religion of the conquered; but corrupted and ſpoiled it. Like the new ſettlers in the kingdom of Ephraim, they feared the Lord and ſerved their own gods. *In thoſe corruptions Antichriſtian error and domination originated. The tyranny of opinion became terrible, and long held human minds enſlaved. Few had ſentiments of their own. The orders of the vatican were received as the mandates of heaven. But at laſt ſome diſcerning and intrepid mortals aroſe who ſaw the abſurdity and impiety of the reigning ſuperſtition, and dared to diſcloſe them to a wondering world! Among thoſe bold reformers,* LUTHER, CALVIN *and a few contemporary worthies, hold a diſtinguiſhed rank. Greatly is the church indebted to them for the light which they diffuſed, and the reformation which they effected. But ſtill the light was imperfect. Dark ſhades remained. This particularly appeared in the dogmatiſm and bigotry of theſe ſame reformers, who often prohibited further inquiries, or emendations! They had differed from Rome, but no body muſt differ from them! As though the infallibility which they denied to another, had been transferred to themſelves!*

Too many others, and in more enlightened times, have diſcovered a ſtrange meaſure of the ſame ſpirit.....a ſpirit which hath damped inquiry and prevented improvement.

HENCE, *probably, the ſilence of ſome expoſitors on difficult ſcriptures, and the ſameneſs obſervable in ſome others For the complaint of the poet is not without reaſon,*

> "That commentators each dark paſſage ſhun,
> And hold their farthing candle to the ſun."

Sameness

AND *the ſameneſs which we ſee in ſeveral writers is probably dictated by fear of ſingularity, and of incurring the charge of hereſy. Minds are different. When a dozen expoſitors interpret a difficult text alike, they muſt, for ſome reaſon, have borrowed from one another.*

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LEE's

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

The Wisdom of God in the means used to propagate the Gospel.

2 CORINTHIANS, i. 27, 28.

*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.**

"THE mercy promiſed to the fathers" was Chriſt, the Savior. That "the deſire of all nations ſhould come," was a prediction of his incarnation; and his entrance here was announced by a heavenly meſſenger, with, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy—to all people."

* The two diſcourſes on this text were originally one, and preached before Windham Aſſociation, at Thompſon, October Seſſion, 1798. Probably ſome of the ideas which they contain, may have been ſuggeſted by reading Paley's evidences of Chriſtianity; but as the author had not that book in his poſſeſſion when he wrote on this ſubject, he is not able particularly to give credit to that excellent writer, if here his due.

Yet "when he came to his own, his own received him not!" To many he hath been "a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence!"

THE deſign and tendency of chriſtianity are moſt benevolent; but being oppoſed to men's luſts, which rule in their members, all the malevolence of depravity hath been excited againſt it. Jews and Gentiles united in the oppoſition. "The kings of the earth ſtood up and the rulers were gathered together againſt the Lord, and againſt his Chriſt—both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Iſrael."

THE Chriſtian religion did not creep into the world in the dark. It firſt appeared at an enlightened period, and among the moſt enlightened of the nations. The ſciences derived from conquered Greece, had been improved at Rome, and communicated to its dependencies. Syria was then a province of the Empire. Every movement in Judea was obſerved and reported at the metropolis. The crucifixion of our Savior was ſanctioned by a Roman deputy; and the perſecuted Chriſtians were allowed an appeal to Cæſar. Soon, therefore, did the religion of Jeſus make its way to Rome.

THE power of Rome had alſo reached its acme; and as the ſpirit of Chriſtianity was diverſe from that of the world, the learning and power of the Empire ſoon combined againſt it. That this religion would be cruſhed and vaniſh away as a dream of the night, was generally expected.

EVERY circumſtance ſeemed to indicate ſuch an event. Thoſe reputed wiſe, conſidered the goſpel

scheme as foolishness; and the instruments which were chosen to propagate it were thought to be weak and contemptible. It was also observed to spread chiefly among the lower orders of men, who had not the advantages of literature, nor been initiated in the mysteries of Judaism, all which served to inspire its enemies with confidence, that it would soon come to nought.

THE apostle takes notice, in the context, of the contempt then so generally poured on Christianity, and declares the wisdom of God in the permission of it. He also predicts the triumph of the cross; especially over the powers then combined against it—predictions which were afterwards fulfilled: For those powers were all subdued and humbled, and Christ and the gospel exalted. The Christian religion was openly professed, and became the most reputable religion in many countries; particularly in Syria and at Rome and its numerous provinces; and by the means then ordered of God. This is the spirit of the text—*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, &c.*

IN discussing the subject, we shall *consider the means used to propagate the gospel—the opposition made against it—and the wisdom of God in the choice of the means;* which will bring up to view some of the objections which have been made against the truth of the gospel.

IN treating of the means used to propagate the gospel, we pass over the preaching and miracles of Christ, and the wonders which took place at his

death and resurrection. These were known to the Jews, and rendered them inexcuseable in neglecting so great salvation; but they preceded sending the gospel to the gentiles, and the means used to spread it among them. The apostle had no reference to Christ, or any thing done or suffered by him, when he spake of *the foolish and weak, and base things*, used of God, *to confound those which are wise and mighty*. He spake only with reference to the instruments which were chosen to carry the gospel abroad and persuade the nations of the earth to receive it.

GOD hath all creatures at his command; he hath power to press the most reluctant into his service, and to compel them to bear his messages, and execute his orders; as we see in the case of Balaam and Jonah. God can make use of men to this end, either by reconciling them to himself, and attaching them to his interest, or by overruling their corrupt and vicious designs to effect his holy purposes, without their consent or knowledge. Most of the prophets were brought into his views, and made desirous to honor him. Many Pagan princes, and others, who knew him not, were yet made instrumental in doing his pleasure and executing his designs. The divine sovereign never wants for agents to accomplish his purposes. He sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and orders the affairs of the universe in such a manner as to do his pleasure. "None can stay his hand." Whether the agents which he employs are willing or unwilling, mean so, or not, is of no importance relative to the event. "His purposes stand, and

the thoughts of his heart to all generations." The attempts of creatures to reverse his orders, and defeat his decrees, only help to their accomplishment. This was particularly the case respecting the measures adopted by the enemies of Christianity to prevent its spreading in the world.

THE persons chosen of God and sent forth to propagate the religion of Christ, were such as human wisdom would have judged very unsuitable. Twelve poor, despised, illiterate men, were called to be apostles;—most of them were fishermen. One was a publican; a collector of the Roman tribute, which had been imposed on the Jews as a conquered people. An employment so odious, that vile persons, regardless of character, would only accept it. Such men we should judge exceedingly unfit for ministers of religion, and not likely to succeed in making converts to it. Yet such were those who were appointed of God, to be prime ministers in the Christian church! Such the men who were sent forth to change the form and administration of Judaism, and overthrow the systems of Paganism, rendered venerable by a general establishment, and the religious reverence of ages. The Jews' religion was from God; who had given abundant evidence of its divine origin. This Christ came not to destroy. But its external administration was to be changed; and in the apprehension of most of those who professed it, it was no less opposed to the gospel scheme, than Paganism. No others had greater enmity to Christianity than the Jews, or entered into the op-

position with warmer zeal. They commonly stood foremost, and stirred up the Gentiles against it, and often with success.

IN treating of the means used to propagate the gospel, we may observe the powers imparted to those who were employed in the work. These were not such as human wisdom would have chosen. "Their weapons were not carnal, though mighty through God." They had none at their command, prepared to punish those who would not receive them, or the doctrines which they inculcated —none to retaliate injuries done them. To abuse they had nothing to oppose, except a patient exhibition of his temper, who "when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered threatened not, committing himself to him who judgeth righteously," and praying for his murderers on the cross.

FALSE religions have often been propagated with the sword—particularly that of Mahomet, and the Romish corruptions of Christianity. These, especially the latter, were urged with every species of cruelty—a mode of attempting to proselyte, evincive of human folly. Arguments totally diverse are requisite to enlighten the mind and produce conviction of a divine mission. With these came the apostles of the Lamb. They were "endowed with power from on high;" and forbidden of their Lord to enter on their ministry until it was conferred upon them. This was accomplished on the day of Pentecost.

THEY had been previously convinced of Christ's truth. They seemed indeed to waver when he suffered, but his resurrection, the opportunities which they had with him after that event, and his ascension, which they had witnessed, must have removed every doubt. But this did not qualify them for their work. It did not furnish them with means to convince others, who had not witnessed those things. But when the Holy Ghost came upon them, on that memorable occasion, they were furnished. The gift of miracles was then, more abundantly than before, imparted to them. In some respects, new, and very necessary communications were then made to them—particularly that of speaking with tongues, which at once carried evidence of their divine mission, and enabled them to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This was the order of their Lord, but devoid of this gift they could not have obeyed it.

THIS gift, as imparted to them, seems to have carried greater evidence of their truth, than their barely speaking all languages. Men out of every nation heard them speak on the day of Pentecost, "*every man in his own tongue!*" Therefore were they amazed, and convinced that the apostles were sent of God and that the gospel was of heavenly derivation.

THOSE heralds of gospel grace were also inspired with courage to speak boldly in the name and cause of Christ, nothing terrified by their enemies; and "when brought before kings and rulers for

his sake, a mouth and wisdom were given them, which all their adversaries were unable to gainsay or resist."

SUCH were the means used of God to propagate the gospel—such the agents whom he employed and such their qualifications.

WE are next to consider the opposition which was made to its propagation.

VARIOUS circumstances combined the world against it. So far as Christianity prevailed, every other religion must fall. No other could stand in connexion with it. The Jewish was not to be overthrown; but such changes were to take place in its outward form, that those who did not know it to be typical of a better dispensation, considered it as included in the general proscription; as doomed to destruction if Christianity prevailed. Against Stephen that was a principal charge—"We have heard him say, that this Jesus, shall change the customs which Moses hath delivered us."

THE different systems of Paganism were not opposed to one another, as they were to that of the gospel. They admitted a plurality of Gods—some superior—others subordinate. They considered them not only as holding different ranks, but as reigning over different countries and nations. If one of their systems was true another might be so. But Christianity admitted only "one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." It declared that all others who had been called Gods and worshiped as such, were not Gods—that those who sacrificed to them, sacrificed

to demons—and it denounced utter, eternal ruin against those who did not forsake them and acknowledge Jehovah. Those peculiarities, apart from the nature of this religion, which is opposed to the lusts of men which rule in their members, would, of course, unite the world against it. Those of every other religion would make a common interest in opposing this, which had fellowship with none of them, but tended to their entire subversion and utter ruin. And it is a fact, that the world did unite against the religion of Jesus, and against those whom he had appointed to inculcate it. Christianity then appeared devoid of support—the opposition to have every thing on its side. Christ's followers were a little flock, destitute of power or learning, and in the world's view utterly contemptible. Rome, the mistress of the world, had reached the summit of her greatness; and she soon turned all her power against the feeble band, who were laboring to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and calling men from dumb idols, to serve the living God.

To the eye of man how unequal the contest? Had not those followers of the Lamb been assured that their redeemer lived—that he was divine—that he was with them, and would be with them, they would have declined a contest with those before whom the world trembled. But they entered, undismayed on the work assigned them, went through with and completed it! They prospered in that to which they were sent. This had never been done had not God been with them; for none of the advantages possessed by their enemies were neglected.

THE first effects of enmity to Christianity were directed against Christ's person. He had been for some time teaching and doing miracles in Judea, and numbers had attached themselves to him. They considered him as a prophet mighty in "word and deed." Some who witnessed his mighty works, exclaimed, "When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" Others, "Is not this the Christ?"

THESE movements among the Jews drew the attention of their rulers, and raised them to opposition. A humble, suffering Savior, did not suit their pride and lust of power. They looked for a temporal deliverer, who would lead them to victory, and subdue under them, the powers which held them in subjection. No other would they receive as the Messias. As soon, therefore, as the fame of Jesus began to spread abroad, and numbers treated him with respect, they resolved to destroy him. At the feast of the passover, which called all the males of Israel to Jerusalem, they caused him to be apprehended—tried him in their great council—condemned him to death, and importuned the Roman governor to sentence him to the cross, as a rebel against Cæsar. The charge was not supported—Christ did not aspire to temporal dominion—"his kingdom was not of this world." The governor declared him not guilty. Had Christ, like the Arabian deceiver, which afterwards arose, assumed the sword, marked his way with blood and carnage, the Jews would have bid him welcome, and flocked to

his ſtandard. Then he might have been denominated a rebel againſt Cæſar. But nothing of this nature was found upon him. Therefore were the Jews his enemies; but the imperial magiſtrate "found no fault in him;" though perſuaded to conſent to his death.

BUT though ſuch were the temper and views of the Romans reſpecting Chriſt, at the time of his ſufferings, they were different when his miniſters went forth to ſet up his religion. When the nature of Chriſtianity was diſcovered, and it appeared oppoſed to Paganiſm, and tending to its deſtruction, the Roman chieftains, who had been taught to venerate their Gods, and claimed to be high prieſts of the national religion, entered with zeal into the views of Chriſt's enemies, and reared the ſtandard againſt his followers. All their powers were exerted to cruſh the cauſe of the divine Immanuel. Ten general perſecutions are ſaid to have been raiſed againſt the Chriſtians; and myriads of the faithful to have been ſacrificed to heathen malice and bigotry.

NEITHER were theſe the only enemies of Chriſt. The learning of the age was applied to confound his followers. The ſophiſtry of Grecian metaphyſics directed againſt his unlettered diſciples. Who could have expected Chriſt's little flock, devoid of every worldly advantage, to have maintained their ground againſt ſuch formidable enemies? Who, judging by the rules of man's judgment, have entertained a ſuſpicion that they would not ſoon be driven from the field? But their

cause was that of God. Heaven was on their side. "In vain did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things. He who sitteth in the heavens, laughed; the Lord had them in derision."

SERMON II.

The Wisdom of God in the means used for propagating the Gospel.

1 Corinthians i. 27, 28.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

In the preceding discourse we took a summary view of the means used of God to propagate the gospel, and of the opposition made to its propagation.

We are now to consider the wisdom of God in the choice of means to this end; which will bring up to our view some of the objections which have been made against the truth of the gospel.

That the gospel is from God, and the means used to propagate it of his appointment, are from sundry considerations, apparent—particularly from the miracles wrought by Christ and by his disciples, who went forth in his name. Conclusive was the reasoning of Nicodemus—"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God;

for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." God, who is perfect in wisdom, would choose no improper or unsuitable means. Their wisdom might not at first appear to men. It did not at first appear. The world cried folly and weakness. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

IN God's hand any means are sufficient to effect his designs. The rod of Moses, when stretched out by divine order, availed to bring all those plagues on Egypt, by which God made himself known and feared. When Israel left that land, it availed to open them a passage through the sea; and afterwards to bring back its waters to the destruction of their enemies.

COULD we see no fitness in divine appointments, we should remember that "we are of yesterday and know nothing," and not dare to arraign divine wisdom, or charge folly on God. But in the case before us, his wisdom is in many respects discernable, as will appear from a consideration of some of the objections which are made against the gospel, and against the means appointed of God to propagate it.

ONE of the objections is taken from the supposed unsuitableness of the means. Considered in itself this made an objection. It is said the allwise God would not have appointed them—that to appoint a company of poor, despised, ignorant fishermen, as prime ministers of a religion, is sufficient to prove that it is not from God, who al-

ways useth the best means and most suitable instruments.

IT is not strange that this should have been objected at the beginning of the gospel day, before any effect of the apostles labors appeared. It is a natural objection for the proud, who thought themselves the best judges of wisdom and propriety, to have made at that day. But it comes with an ill grace from modern infidels, who cannot deny that Christianity triumphed over the power and learning of the world combined against it, though such means only were used to propagate it—such weak instruments employed in it. Naaman, the Syrian, reasoned at first like one of these objectors, but the success which attended the prophets directions convinced him of his error. Why has not the same the like effect on these? Surely, "had this counsel been of men, it would have come to nought." Under the circumstances in which Christianity made its appearance, it would have been easily overthrown; but the power of the world could not overthrow it, or prevent it from spreading far and wide. It continued—it prospered—and every opposing system fell before it. Means and instruments which human wisdom would have judged most suitable, could have done no more. The success of measures in a contest like this, proves their fitness.

UNDER this head it is further objected that the first ministers of the gospel were ignorant of the arts and sciences cultivated by the polished nations of the age—that therefore, they were despised, especially by the Greeks.

DESPISED they might be by thoſe who "profeſſing themſelves wiſe had become fools." Yet they had all the knowledge which their work required imparted to them from above. The language of the ſchools would have been ill adapted to the ſimplicity of the goſpel. It would have been unintelligible to many of thoſe to whom the goſpel was ſent. The goſpel offers ſalvation to the unlearned, equally as to the learned—ſhould be expreſſed, therefore, in language eaſy to be underſtood. Had the apoſtles and evangeliſts uſed the abſtruſe language of the ſchoolmen, to many they would have ſpoken in an unknown tongue. Had the ſcriptures been written in ſuch language, they would have been much more obſcure than they now are.

THOUGH the goſpel is plainly written, it may be rendered dark and myſterious, by a metaphyſic dreſs. It is a peculiar excellency of the ſcriptures that they are moſtly written in the plain language of common ſenſe—ſo plainly, that "he may run who readeth them."

Two of the New Teſtament writers were men of letters, Paul and Luke; and we find more obſcurity in their writings, eſpecially thoſe of the former, occaſioned by alluſions to the ſciences and uſages of the age, than in the other writers of that holy book. The Apocalypſe is indeed abſtruſe, but this is not occaſioned by the language, which is plain, but by the ſubject. That book is chiefly prophetic; and therefore expreſſed in the metaphors of prophetic ſtyle. Prophecy is

not generally designed to be fully understood, till explained by the accomplishment.

To take occasion from those who might object to the illiterate character of primitive gospel ministers, a Paul, and a Luke were found among them; but neither of them was among those first called to the Christian ministry. Those first sent forth to preach the gospel were unlearned men. The great truths of the gospel had been taught, and many had received them before these (especially St. Paul) had become believers—that the faith of the first followers of Christ, might appear, "not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in power of God."

HAD the primitive ministry been learned philosophers, or renowned rhetoricians, suspicions might have arisen that mankind had been deceived, that they had been bewildered by the subtilty of science, or charmed by the fascinating power of eloquence, into the belief of a scheme which they did not understand. This cannot be suspected when the character of the first Christian ministers is considered, and the progress which had been made in propagating the gospel, before any of the learned were joined as their assistants in the work.

THE propriety of the gospel method, may be farther argued from the nature of the gospel. Wisdom of words is not necessary to communicate gospel truths, or deep penetration, sufficiently to understand them. It was a remark of the apostle "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called." The same

observation may yet be made. People of plain common sense more often receive the gospel, and savor the things of true religion, than those who affect superior powers, and to understand all mysteries. Those who are wise in their own imaginations, often reject the counsel of God against themselves, and put from them offered salvation.

THE manner in which the apostles and their fellow laborers preached the gospel, hath also been objected to as unwise. Their preaching was chiefly a plain unaffected exhibition of truth, laid before those who heard them, and left with them. To produce faith in Christ, they declared the time, place and circumstances of his birth, referring to the prophecies which foretold them—declared the concurring testimonies of angels and inspired persons, who gave witness for him—exhibited sketches of his life—his teaching—his miracles—declared his prediction of his own death, with the manner, time, and place—also of his resurrection on the third day, and the fulfilment of those predictions. They referred to his foretelling Peter's fall and recovery; Judas' treachery and end, with the events which followed—they referred also to Christ's teaching and miracles—to those which attended his sufferings and resurrection—they adduced the evidence which they had of his death and resurrection—declared the opportunities which they had with him after his passion—the instructions they received from him—the orders which he gave them, and his ascension from the mount of Olives, of which they were witnesses, "confirming their words with signs following."

To persuade men to receive and obey the gospel, they declared the consequences to those who received, and to those who rejected it—that the same Jesus who had died on the cross, was appointed by the Father, "to be the Judge of quick and dead—that he would come again in like manner as he had gone away—that all mankind must appear before his judgment seat to give an account of themselves, and receive the deeds done in the body," that those who flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel, will find mercy, and be made forever happy with God, but those who neglect the gospel will be sent away into everlasting punishment.

SUCH interesting truths, those ministers of Christ laid before mankind, and left with them for their consideration. But they used no rhetoric to impress them. Neither did they appeal to the passions of their hearers; in which they followed the pattern set them by their Lord, who "did not strive, nor cry, nor cause any man to hear his voice in the streets." With only a fair statement of these truths, accompanied with the offer of "mercy and grace to help in time of need," they left mankind to choose for themselves and abide the consequences.

THIS some have thought an improper manner of calling men into the kingdom of Christ; that had they been more pathetic in their addresses, and more argumentative in their applications, they would have labored with more effect; that this plain and simple method is unworthy of God, and not likely to be from him.

IF we consider the nature and design of Christianity, such objections will have little weight. It is not the design of heaven to compel men to obey the gospel, or to drive them to an unwilling submission to Christ. If an exhibition of gospel truth and beauty, and the consequences of receiving or rejecting its overtures, are disregarded; if men refuse, by these means to be persuaded, they are left, and the consequences follow. To people of sober sense, this method appears rational. It is not probable that those who are not *thus* prevailed with to embrace the gospel, would in any other way be made Christians indeed. People who are frightened into religion seldom persevere. Neither do those whose passions are so inflamed that they appear, for a time, in ecstasies. When their passions subside, they grow cool, and their religion dies. If the great truths of religion, laid before men, as was done by Christ and his apostles, do not avail to render them rationally and sincerely religious, little value is to be put on those heats of imagination, which produce temporary raptures, and set some on fire in religion. Such ardent love doth not abide; it soon cools, and commonly leaves those who had been the subjects of it no better than it found them, and but too often much worse.

BUT while some object to the simplicity of the gospel, and to the plain language and address of the primitive ministry, others are offended at the mysteries in the Christian system. "Who can understand some things contained in what is

called a revelation? And what valuable ends can be answered by a revelation which is unintelligible? say these objectors.

BUT, those points in the Christian scheme, which are too deep for human comprehension, do not relate to practice. All required, in relation to them, is an assent to their truth, on the credit of God's word. This is neither difficult nor unreasonable.

PERHAPS with only human powers, it may be impossible to comprehend those subjects which are left mysterious in divine revelation; but are they incredible if God hath declared them? Few would be the articles of our creed, did we admit the belief of nothing which we do not understand. We carry mysteries in ourselves. We are compounded of soul and body, but who explain the connexion; tell us the essence of either the one or the other, or define the principles on which the soul commands the body? We are lost in ourselves, and in all the objects which surround us.

WHATEVER God hath declared, we are bound to believe because he hath declared it; and whatever he hath enjoined, we are bound to do because he hath enjoined it, though the reasons of his injunctions may not be revealed. God is under no obligations to explain matters to us. "God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive with him? He giveth not account of his matters."

OTHERS object because the Gospel is not sent to all nations. That God should be supposed to communicate it to some, and not to others, they

allege to be unreaſonable, and ſufficient to deſtroy its credit; eſpecially, as the book which claims to be a revelation teacheth that "there is no reſpect of perſons with God."

THAT God makes his creatures to differ reſpecting talents and advantages, is a truth not to be denied. Thoſe who on this account, object to the truth of the goſpel, will not deny it. If God makes differences reſpecting every thing elſe, why not reſpecting religion? Where is the injuſtice or impropriety of trying ſome with goſpel advantages; others only with the light of nature? If requirements vary with betruſtments, none have reaſon to complain; and that this is the caſe is plainly the language of revelation.*

WITH equal reaſon might the hand of God in creation be denied, becauſe different grades are found among creatures, and ſome have greatly the advantage over others; and in providence becauſe its diſtributions are unequal. That theſe inequalities are obſervable, and that they are the work of God, will be acknowledged by all who believe the being of a God, and his providential government. If any are diſpoſed to call theſe in queſtion, we turn from them. To reaſon with them would be in vain. "That which may be known of God is manifeſt in them; for God hath ſhewed it unto them. For the inviſible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; ſo that they are without excuſe."

* Vid. Diſcourſe on Romans, ii. 11.

A SCOFFING age may cry out against Christianity. To some it may be a "stumbling block; to others foolishness." Men may exclaim against the gospel, and against the doctrines and duties of it, and the means which have been used of God to propagate it. Still "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." So it hath been in times past; so it will be in times to come. *The foolish, the weak and base things of the world, have confounded and brought to nought, all the world termed wise, and great, and mighty.*

IMPERIAL Rome at the summit of her greatness, could not crush the cause of him who died on Calvary! "Had this counsel or work been of men, it would have come to nought." Probably the name of Jesus, would long ere now have perished from the earth. But all his enemies could do nothing effectually against him. They could only do "what God's counsel had determined to be done."

CHRISTIANITY hath still its enemies; of the same character with those of old. They have overthrown the faith of some. Others they may seduce. That "scoffers should arise, in the last days walking after their own lusts; that some should deny the Lord that bought them, and that many should follow their pernicious ways," were foretold by an inspired apostle, and "they turn to us for a testimony."

WE are called a Christian people. "If we believe the gospel, happy are we if we obey it." The generality profess to believe it. But how is it

received? Do not many neglect it? Do not some who assent to its truth, "go their way to their farms, or their merchandize," regardless of it, neither confessing Christ before men, nor seeking an interest in him?

IF the gospel is from God, to such neglecters of the grace it offers, it must be "a savor of death unto death!" And is not their number great? Doth it not increase from year to year, from age to age? To those who are taken up with sensual pleasures, and with minding only earthly things, St. Paul would say "even weeping you are enemies to the cross of Christ, and your end will be destruction."

LET us be persuaded to bring home these considerations to ourselves. We are deeply interested in them. "The secrets of our hearts will ere long be judged by the gospel of Christ." To those who will not receive and obey the gospel, we have only to say, "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

SERMON III.

The Declensions of Christianity, an Argument of its Truth.

LUKE xviii. 8.

When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

"HE that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." So testified the risen Savior. Faith is made a condition of salvation. But God requires only a reasonable service. He must then have given evidence of the truth to which he requires assent. He hath given it abundantly. Christians "are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses."

THE proofs of Christianity are of two kinds; external and internal. Both are strong. United they leave infidelity without excuse.

OF external, the chief are miracles and prophecy. Miracles carried conviction to beholders; and were designed to give credibility to special messengers. Prophecy is a standing evidence, by which testimony is borne to the truth of revelation; yea, it is a growing evidence, which gains strength by every fulfilment.

SOME may envy thoſe who lived in the age of miracles, ſuppoſing them ſufficient to baniſh every doubt. But the proof ariſing from the fulfilment of prophecy, which we enjoy above them, is equal, if not ſuperior to theirs.

THE prophecies contain ſketches of the hiſtory of man, and of the plan of providence, from their reſpective dates to the end of the world. Thoſe which relate *to the declenſions of religion, which were to take place under the goſpel diſpenſation,* will now only be conſidered.

FROM thoſe declenſions, arguments are drawn againſt the truth of Chriſtianity. "Was Chriſtianity from God, he would verify the declaration made by him who claimed to be his Son. *The gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* But they do prevail. What was once ſaid of its author, *Behold the world is gone after him,* will now apply to its enemy. This religion is not therefore from God, but of man's device. Propt up as it is, by human laws, and ſupported by "the powers that be," it totters towards ruin. Left to itſelf, it would ſoon fall and come to nought."

SUCH are the proud vauntings of infidelity, when "iniquity abounds and the love of many waxeth cold." So when Chriſt hung on the croſs, and when he ſlept in the tomb, ignorant of conſequences, his diſciples "wept and lamented, and the world rejoiced;" but the time was ſhort. Soon the world was confounded, and the "ſorrows of his diſciples was turned into joy."

IF the declenſions which we witneſs, are foretold in ſcripture, they are no occaſion of ſurprize.

Yea, inſtead of weakening our faith, they may reaſonably increaſe it. And when we conſider the aſſurances given us, that theſe declenſions were to antecede the univerſal prevalence of true religion; they may alſo ſerve to increaſe our hope.

To *ſhew that theſe declenſions are foretold, and that we may expect yet greater abominations, than have hitherto appeared,* is attempted in the following diſcourſe.

WHEN *the ſon of man cometh ſhall he find faith on the earth?*

THAT Chriſt is here intended by *the Son of man;* and that faith will be rare among men at the coming of his, referred to, are not doubtful matters. But what coming of Chriſt is here referred to? This is firſt to be aſcertained.

THE coming of Chriſt, refers in the ſcripture, to ſeveral events. Sometimes to his incarnation; ſometimes to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the Jewiſh polity; ſometimes to his coming to judgment; and ſometimes to the beginning of that univerſal dominion which he is to exerciſe on earth in the latter days. Each of theſe is the ſubject of ſeveral prophecies.

CHRIST'S incarnation, or his coming to dwell with men, and to obey and ſuffer for their redemption, was a principal ſubject of the old teſtament prophecies. "To him gave all the prophets witneſs."

THE divine juſtice executed on the Jews, in the deſtruction of their chief city, and polity, is alſo

termed Chriſt's coming. This was the ſubject of ſeveral prophecies of old. It was foretold by Moſes, and ſundry others who lived before the goſpel day; but more particularly by Chriſt, in perſon, juſt before his ſufferings. To this event the deſolations foretold in the twentyfourth of Matthew, and its parallels in the other goſpels, had a primary reference. The metaphors uſed to deſcribe it are ſtrong. They have been ſuppoſed to refer to the general judgment; and they have, no doubt an ultimate reference to it. But they refer, more immediately to another coming of Chriſt; his coming to render to the Jews according to their demerits as a people, ſoon after they ſhould have filled up the meaſure of their iniquity by his crucifixion; which by the circumſtances attending it, became a national act.

THAT this coming of Chriſt was particularly intended in thoſe predictions, is, from ſeveral conſiderations apparent. That the Chriſtians of that age, who were converſant with the apoſtles, and inſtructed by them, received this to be the meaning of thoſe prophecies, and that they fled at the approach of the Roman armies, and eſcaped the deſtruction which came on the Jews, are matters of notoriety. And that this was the primary meaning of thoſe prophecies, is further evident from an expreſs declaration which they contain; "*Verily I ſay unto you, This generation ſhall not paſs away till all theſe things be fulfilled.*" This cloſeth the prophecy. The whole muſt therefore have received a primary accompliſhment, "before that gener-

ation did paſs away." This was fulfilled in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Titus.

CHRIST's coming to judgment, is often foretold in every part of the new teſtament, to paſs over the intimations given of it in the old. But none of theſe can be *the coming of the Son of man*, referred to in the text. That it cannot refer to his incarnation is evident, from the time in which the declaration in the text was made. His coming in the fleſh had been then accompliſhed.

NEITHER can it refer to his coming to puniſh Jewiſh apoſtacy and ingratitude; or to his coming to judge the world in righteouſneſs, becauſe the moral ſtate of the world at neither of thoſe periods, anſwers to the deſcription here given. *Shall he find faith on the earth?*

THE ruin of the Jews by the Roman armies, happened about thirtyſix years after Chriſt's crucifixion. Long ere that time the ſpirit had been poured out, and many had embraced the goſpel. The apoſtles and evangeliſts, had gone, not only to "the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael, but alſo into the way of the Gentiles;" had called "thoſe who were afar off, as well as thoſe who were near; their ſound had gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Neither had they labored among the Gentiles in vain. St. Paul ſpake by the Spirit when he declared to the Jews that the ſalvation of God was ſent unto the Gentiles, and they would hear it." His word was verified. "Many were added to the Lord, and the number of the diſciples was multiplied."

Such was the ſtate of the world, at that *coming of the Son of man. Faith was then to be found on the earth,* if not among Jews.

WHEN Chriſt ſhall come to judgment, we have reaſon to believe, that *faith will alſo be found on earth*; and more than at that period we have now conſidered.

THE ſcriptures of both teſtaments, abound with predictions of the univerſal prevalence of religion, in the latter days;" of the whole worlds rejoicing under the auſpicious government of the Prince of Peace; of reſtraints laid on the powers of darkneſs, that they ſhould not deceive and ſeduce mankind. And though we are taught that "the old ſerpent will afterwards be looſed, for a little ſeaſon, and go forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," we have no intimation that the main body of the Church will be corrupted by his influence, or injured by his power. His adherents may "compaſs the camp of the ſaints, and the beloved city," but will make no attack upon them. "Fire will come down from God out of heaven, and deſtroy them." By ſome ſpecial, perhaps miraculous interpoſition of providence, the people of God will be protected and delivered.

ST. JOHN, who gives more particulars of the latter day glory, than thoſe who had gone before him, fixes the term Chriſt's reign on earth to a thouſand years, which he repreſents as to be thoſe *next preceding* the judgment. And agreeably to the ſtatement which he hath made, a numerous

body of saints will then be found to welcome their Lord, and rejoice before him at his coming.

To this agree the other prophets who treat of this subject. No other limits the term of Christ's reign; or mentions Satan's being enlarged and permitted any measure of deceptive influence, after the restraints laid upon him at the beginning Christ's reign. But others foretell the happy day, and several seem to dwell delightfully upon it, and represent it as continuing to the end of time; and none give the remotest hint that it is to terminate, and iniquity again to become universally prevalent.

ISAIAH often mentions it, and dilates more largely upon it than any other who lived before the gospel day. From his representations we should expect it to terminate *only with time.* "I will make the an *eternal* excellency—violence shall *no more be heard* in thy land; wasting nor destruction within thy borders—the sun shall be *no more* thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee *an everlasting light*, and thy God thy glory—the days of thy mourning *shall be ended*—thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land *forever.*"

BY the little horn in Daniel's vision, Antichrist is doubtless intended. When at his fall Christ is to take the kingdom; or it is to be given to his people, it is to be an abiding kingdom. "And there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him; his dominion *is an ev-*

erlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.

THIS is a prophecy of the univerſal prevalence of true religion in the laſt days, after the reign of Antichriſt ſhall have come to an end. By the explanation in the latter part of the chapter, the ſaints are from that period to have the dominion. It is no more to be taken from them. "The ſaints of the moſt high ſhall take the kingdom, and *poſſeſs the kingdom for ever, even forever and ever*—and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatneſs of the kingdom under the whole heaven, ſhall be given to the people of the ſaints of the moſt high, *whoſe kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom*, and all dominion ſhall ſerve and obey him."

THESE repreſentations agree with that made to St. John, who ſaw the church guarded and protected from infernal power and influence, at the cloſe of the millennium. The only difference conſiſts in the mention of a few particulars by the apoſtle, which were not communicated to the prophets; ſuch as the term of Chriſt's reign on earth; and ſome fruitleſs attempts of the powers of darkneſs againſt his people, after that term ſhall have expired.

THE coming to judgment cannot therefore be intended in the text. *There will then be faith on the earth.* But if we conſider "that which is noted in the ſcripture of truth," reſpecting the moral ſtate of the world before and at the time of Chriſt's coming to reign upon it, we ſhall find it anſwering to this deſcription.

WE will therefore, firſt *take a general view of the prophecies reſpecting the moral ſtate of the world, under the goſpel diſpenſation—Then a more particular view of the great declenſions which were to take place, with a ſpecial reference to the ſtate of religion at the approach of the latter day glory.*

THE Savior, in perſon, and by his Spirit, gave general intimations to the apoſtles, of the times which were to paſs over them, and over his church. When they were ordered to preach the goſpel in all the world, beginning at Jeruſalem, they were forewarned that the Jews would reject their teſtimony, and perſecute them, as they had perſecuted their Lord—that ſoon after "there would be great diſtreſs in that land, and wrath upon that people—that they would fall by the ſword; be led captive into all nations, and that Jeruſalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles ſhould be fulfilled."

THE comforter which was to "teach them all things," not only explaining the nature of Chriſtianity, and cauſing them to underſtand it, but alſo to unveil futurity before them, taught them, that after the Jews had rejected the goſpel, the Gentiles would receive it, and the church grow and become great; that a falling away would afterwards follow, which would ſpread wide, and continue for a long time, till it became nearly total; that when ſuch was the ſtate of the church, Chriſt would come, take the kingdom, and reign on earth.

SUCH were the outlines of futurity, relative to Chriſtianity, as ſketched out before the apoſtles.

But if we deſcend to particulars, and examine the prophecies with attention, we ſhall find that the defections, which were to take place antecedent to the reign of the Redeemer, were to be of two kinds —that they were to ariſe at different times, and from different ſources—that one was to be a corruption of religion, the other a rejection of it—that the former was to antecede and prepare the way for the latter.

THIS will be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

SERMON IV.

The Declensions of Christianity, an Argument of its Truth.

LUKE xviii. 8.

When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

THAT *the coming of the Son of man*, is here intended of Christ's coming at the commencement of the latter day glory, hath been alleged in the preceding discourse, and several considerations adduced in proof. Additional evidence will arise from a view of the prophecies *relative to the great declensions* which were to take place in the church, during the gospel day. These, we observed, are of two kinds, one, a *corruption of religion*, the other *its rejection*.

THE intimations given of them in the new testament, are chiefly found in the writings of St. Paul, Peter and John. They are noticed also by Jude. The two former suffered martyrdom under Nero. When the time of their departure drew nigh, they had separately a view of the then future state of the church; particularly of the declen-

ſions which were to take place in it, before "the kingdoms of this world, ſhall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Chriſt." St. John had the ſame opened to his view in the iſle of Patmos.

ST. PAUL in his ſecond epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, after rectifying the miſtake of thoſe who thought the day of judgment then at hand, proceded to inform them that there would be great declenſions in the church before the end of the world. "Let no man deceive you, by any means, for that day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away firſt, and that man of ſin be revealed, the ſon of perdition; who oppoſeth himſelf above all that is called God, or is worſhipped; ſo that as God, he ſitteth in the temple of God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God." The antichriſtian defection is here evidently intended. The apoſtle toucheth on the ſame ſubject in his firſt epiſtle to Timothy, and directs him "to put the brethren in remembrance of theſe things," to prevent ſurpriſe when they ſhould happen. This was the firſt great declenſion which was to be permitted in the church.

IN his ſecond epiſtle to the ſame Chriſtian biſhop, written not long before his death, he reſumes the ſubject of the defections which were to happen in the church, but with a more particular reference to defections of a different kind, and of a later date. Having exhorted Timothy to faithfulneſs in the diſcharge of official duty, he adds a reaſon; "For the time will come when they will not endure ſound doctrine; but after their own

luſts, ſhall heap to themſelves teachers, having itching ears; and they ſhall turn their ears from the truth, and ſhall be turned unto fables."

THIS doth not anſwer to the Romiſh defection. It was never the character of that church to "heap to themſelves teachers." They never ran after thoſe of other perſuaſions, who brought new doctrines. Their errors were of the contrary kind. They rejected and perſecuted every teacher who did not derive from their *infallible head*, and teach as he directed. But "itching ears" have miſled many of thoſe, who "are moved away from the hope of the goſpel. By turning to fables they have made ſhipwreck of faith, and fallen a prey to thoſe who lie in wait to deceive."

ST. PETER wrote with equal plainneſs of the general defections; but thoſe of infidelity are the ſubject of his prophecies—"There ſhall be falſe teachers among you, who privily ſhall bring in damnable hereſies, *even denying the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction. And many ſhall follow their pernicious ways; by reaſon of whom the truth ſhall be evil ſpoken of." The hereſies here intended are depicted too minutely to be miſtaken. The hereſiarchs are deſcribed as immoral, vain and proud, pretending to ſuperior knowledge and penetration, deſpiſing law and government, and trampling them under their feet.

TOWARD the cloſe of his ſecond epiſtle, the apoſtle remarks, that he "wrote to ſtir up pure minds by way of remembrance; that they might

be mindful of the words *ſpoken before,* by the holy prophets"—that is, of the predictions of inſpired men, who had forewarned them of thoſe deceivers —"Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days, ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying where is the promiſe of his coming?" And he refers them to St. Paul, who had predicted their riſe in the church—"Even as our beloved brother Paul alſo, according to the wiſdom given unto him hath written unto you: As alſo in all his epiſtles, ſpeaking in them *of theſe things.*" He adds—"Ye therefore, beloved, ſeeing ye know theſe things before, beware, leſt ye alſo, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs."

THE ſhort epiſtle of St. Jude is little other than a prophetic deſcription of the ſame apoſtacy and its leaders, whom he terms "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs, and *denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*—Theſe are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own luſts, and their mouths ſpeaking great ſwelling words—But beloved, remember ye the words which were *ſpoken before* of the apoſtles of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; how they told you there ſhould be mockers in the laſt time, who ſhould walk after their own luſts."

THE errors of Rome are not here intended. They are manifeſtly errors of a later date, which were to appear after thoſe of Rome ſhould ſubſide, having loſt their influence. It is repeatedly noted that they were to ariſe *in the laſt days.* They are

errors of which this age is witneſs—errors which have ſpread, and are yet ſpreading—thoſe of infidelity and atheiſm, with their uſual attendants, immorality in every hideous form. We ſhould therefore "remember the words which were ſpoken before"—the warnings which have been given us of thoſe defections, which were to intervene thoſe of Antichriſt, and *the coming of the Son of man.*

THE Apocalypſe, though of more difficult interpretation, contains ſome particulars ſufficiently intelligible, and to our purpoſe. The writer enlarges on the Romiſh apoſtacy, which he deſcribes more minutely than any who had preceded him, both in its riſe and progreſs, and alſo in the circumſtances which ſhould attend its overthrow. He foretells the ſpirit, pride, riches, glare of ornaments, ſtrange abominations, and unprecedented cruelties; the power, ſigns and lying wonders, which were to render Rome the wonder and dread of the whole earth. The portrait is in every part ſo exact and circumſtantial, that none who are acquainted with the hiſtory of that church, can miſtake it; unleſs blinded by intereſt or prejudice.

THE apoſtle predicts alſo the other great defection which was to follow the antichriſtian, though in language more obſcure and figurative. "And I ſaw three unclean ſpirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaſt, and out of the mouth of the falſe prophet. For they are the ſpirits, of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the

earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty."*

IT deſerves particular notice that all theſe ſtrange declenſions, which were foretold, as to take place in the church, and world, are repreſented as *antecedent* to Chriſt's reign on earth, and terminating *before* the commencement of that bleſſed era.

IT is farther to be obſerved that during the whole antichriſtian defection, God's "two witneſſes were to prophecy clothed in ſackcloth." God would have a ſmall, but ſufficient number of faithful ſervants, who, in low and humble circumſtances, would maintain the truth and be witneſſes for him during the reign of the man of ſin. But about the end of his reign, they will have finiſhed their teſtimony. Their enemies will then prevail againſt them and deſtroy them, and for a ſhort term there will be none to ſtand up for God† —none to warn the wicked, or to diſturb them in their choſen ways. And they are repreſented as exulting in their deliverance from the ſociety of thoſe who amidſt their departures from the living God, had tormented them,‡ by warnings of future

* Vid. a diſcourſe on this ſubject, by Timothy Dwight, D. D. Preſident of Yale College, printed at Newhaven, A. D. 1798.

† COMPARATIVELY NONE. The number will be exceeding ſmall--the times reſemble before the flood, when Noah was ſaid to ſtand alone. The papacy of Rome ſo worſhip may be kept up in that church, till mystical Babylon ſhall be deſtroyed, in the awful manner foretold in the Revelation; but it is evident that long ſince, ſapped the foundations of the catholic religion, being erected on the ruins of ſuperſtition. The abſurd doctrines, and legendary tales of popery, may have been credited in the dark ages, when many of the clergy were unable to write their names, or ſo much as read them alphabet; but the belief of them is utterly inconſiſtent with the light every where diffuſed ſince the revival of literature.

‡ TORMENTED THEM. This language is remarkable. It intimates that

wrath, and an eternity according to their works. For this is the way in which God's witneſſes torment the wicked.

God's witneſſes teſtify not only againſt anti-chriſtian errors, but alſo againſt infidelity and the immorality it occaſions. When he ceaſes to have witneſſes there will be none to teſtify againſt either the one or the other. The world muſt *then* be deluged in infidelity and atheiſm. This agrees with the repreſentation given by the apoſtle; who deſcribes the enemies of God as refuſing graves to his ſlaughtered witneſſes, and cauſing their dead bodies to lie expoſed to public view, that they may rejoice over them, and congratulate one another on their deliverance from the company of thoſe who had diſturbed them in their ſinful indulgences; and ſuch as continuing to be the ſtate of "the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations," till the witneſſes are raiſed from the dead and aſcend to heaven in the preſence of their enemies; when Chriſtianity will revive, and Chriſt's reign on earth begin.

THESE repreſentations may be deſigned to intimate that the term in which infidelity will appear to be univerſal, will be ſo ſhort that the warnings of the faithful will not be forgotten—that they will

[illegible]

be kept in mind by the exultations occaſioned by deliverance from the fears of religion, and from the preſence of thoſe who had excited thoſe fears, by exhibiting proofs of religion which they could not refute. And how natural and common are ſuch exultations, with thoſe devoid of religious fear? But agreeably to the view given by the apoſtle, when ſuch ſhall have become the ſtate of the world, and the nations ſhall be thus felicitating themſelves in full perſuaſion that all religion is a dream, and death an eternal ſleep, the ſignals of Chriſt's coming to take the kingdom, will be given, and witneſſes of the truth of Chriſtianity, which cannot be diſputed, ſuddenly ariſe, to the ſurprize and confuſion of ſcoffing ſinners; multitudes of whom will be ſwept off by deſolating judgments, to prepare the way for "the people of the ſaints of the moſt high, *whoſe kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom.*" For that deſolations are to cloſe the ſad ſcene of apoſtacy, and prepare Chriſt's way is clearly foretold; particularly by St. John, who beheld, in viſion, "the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, gathered to the battle of the great day of God Almighty;" and ſaw ſuch an effuſion of their blood, that "the harveſt of the earth might be conſidered as reaped, the vine of the earth as cut and caſt into the great wine preſs of the wrath of God, whence flowed blood to the horſes bridles."*

THUS from the general tenor of prophecy it appears that infidelity will have overſpread the world *when the Son of man ſhall come* to reign upon

* Revelation xiv. 15, 20.

it: And as this agrees to no other *coming* of his foretold by the prophets, there can be no reasonable doubt what *coming* is intended in the text. If we keep these things in mind, we shall not wonder at the declensions of religion and prevalence of infidelity. They will remind us of the remark made by our Savior to his sorrowing disciples just before his sufferings, "these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."

BEFORE, or about the time of this *coming of the Son of man*, Antichrist will fall—Mahomedan delusion terminate—"The Jews look to him whom they pierced, and mourn—be gathered the second time" from their dispersions, and returned to their own land, and the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in. Perhaps these may be the signs of Christ's coming, intended by the resurrection of the witnesses. When these events shall take place "the Lord will be king over all the earth. In that day there will be one Lord and his name one."

REFLEXIONS.

IF we do not mistake the coming of the Son of man, here referred to, gloomy is the prospect now immediately before us. Hitherto God hath had his witnesses; but ere long they will cease from their labors, and leave infidelity undisturbed.

THAT the cause of the redeemer was to be depressed, before its universal prevalence in the latter days, is plainly revealed. The only difficulty is to ascertain the manner. Bishop Newton expects another confederacy of the catholic powers to de-

ſtroy the followers of the Lamb, which will ſo nearly ſucceed, that for a ſhort term none will dare to appear as his followers. But if infidelity was to intervene the antichriſtian defection, and the prevalence of religion in the latter days, is this hypotheſis probable? Is it not more reaſonable to expect the deſtruction of the witneſſes in another way, and by other enemies—by the mockers and ſcoffers of the laſt times, who ſhould be generated by papal error and ſuperſtition? And doth not the preſent ſtate of the world confirm theſe expectations? The catholic religion hath been declining for ſeveral ages. It received a deadly wound from Luther and his aſſociates, which hath not yet been healed. From that period it hath dwindled, and is now little more than a name. But infidelity hath been, for almoſt an equal term progreſſing, and already ſtalks out to public view: Yea, it vaunts with ſhameleſs pride, as though ſure of victory. And we are conſtrained to acknowledge, that "of a truth, it hath laid waſte nations and their countries!"

OUR expectation is farther confirmed by obſerving the change which is made in the weapons of infernal warfare. Theſe are no longer bonds, impriſonments, tortures and death, but the ſhafts of ridicule, and ſneers of contempt. "Trials of cruel mockings," now exerciſe the faith and patience of the ſaints. Religion, the dignity and hope of man, hath become the ſport of ſtupid infidels! The jeſt of ſorry witlings! Theſe hiſſings of the ſerpent are every where to be heard!

INFERNAL malice, never before made ſo general an attack in this way. Perhaps, with all his ſagacity, the adverſary did not ſuſpect that creatures made for eternity could be driven from the way of peace by the deriſion of fools, till taught it by experience. But this hath been found his moſt ſucceſsful weapon! It hath done greater miſchief to chriſtianity, than all the rage of perſecution!

MANY account it honorable, to ſuffer, pain or loſs, with patience, and to face danger and death with fortitude; but few think themſelves honored by ſcorn and reproach. Human nature is here attacked on its weakeſt ſide.

SOME European ſcoffers, of high rank, during the laſt age took the lead in this mode of attack on chriſtianity; and have been followed by a countleſs throng of noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, down to this day. Few infidels are ſo modeſt as not to affect wit on the ſubject of religion; few witticiſms ſo contemptible as not to meet the approbation and receive the applauſe of brother infidels.

THAT ſtrong combinations have been formed againſt chriſtianity, and alſo againſt civil government, in the kingdoms of Europe, and that they have too ſucceſsfully undermined both, is an acknowledged fact.

IN the leaders of thoſe conſpiracies we diſcover all the traits of character, attributed in prophecy to the ſcoffers who ſhould ariſe in the laſt days. When every circumſtance, in events ſo remarka-

ble, agree with the predictions, can doubt remain whether the predictions are fulfilled?

THERE hath been faith in this land. It is not yet extinct. But we are importing the principles, and practices of Europe. "The mockers of the laſt times" are now to be ſeen on this ſide the Atlantic. "Many follow their pernicious ways." We have reaſon to expect the evils to increaſe till "the godly ceaſe and the faithful fail" from among us. *For when the Son of man cometh ſhall he find faith on the earth?* This land will *alſo* be overſpread with infidelity! "The whole world lie in wickedneſs!"

THERE may be partial revivals of religion, but no general reformation is to be expected; and after every refreſhing, the declenſions will probably be greater than before. Fanatic emotions, here and there, may flatter ſome who are friends to religion, but they only ſerve to accelerate the ſpread of infidelity.

IT is a gloomy thought! The ſerious ſoul ſaddens; ſorrow fills the good man's heart, if, when he ſees little regard paid to religion, he expects yet greater defections! If when he ſees but few of thoſe who are riſing into life, paying attention to the beſt things, he expects ſtill fewer of their deſcendants to be wiſe and good! Yea that the declenſions will continue and increaſe, "till all fleſh ſhall become corrupt, and the earth be filled with violence!" Would to God theſe expectations might not be realized; for they are exceedingly diſtreſſing. But they appear to us to be dictated

by the ſpirit of truth, and confirmed by the hiſtory of the world, and by the progreſs of events opening to view.

ONE conſideration, however, miniſters conſolation, ſhining through the gloom; namely, the long, holy, happy period, which may be expected to follow the dark term now approaching.

BY *dark* we mean only in a moral view. Reſpecting arts and ſciences, mankind may never have been more enlightened than at preſent. But this is foreign to religion. When Egypt, Greece, and Rome, were the ſeats of the muſes, they remained as devoid of religious knowledge, as the moſt ignorant barbarians. Arts and ſciences may ſtill flouriſh, and yet deeper reſearches be made into the *arcana* of nature, while religion is dying away and atheiſm ſucceeding in its place.

SOME intervening links are neceſſary to connect the preſent age with the happy times now diſtant. Who ſhall fill them, the divine ſovereign will determine. An hour of temptation muſt try all who dwell upon the earth. Theſe are the times in which we are tried.

Do we envy thoſe who may live during the peaceful reign of the Redeemer? Let us not forget that we are favored above many who have gone before us—above ſome of our contemporaries, and probably above thoſe who will ſucceed us, before the commencement of that happy era. Nothing neceſſary to ſalvation is denied us. If ſtraitened it is in our own bowels. If faithful to improve the talents put into our hands, "our labor will not be in vain in the Lord"—God will

keep us to his kingdom. There we ſhall ſee Chriſt's glory, though we may never ſee it here as ſome others who come after us.

BE it alſo remembered, that the rewards of the coming world, will be proportioned to the difficulties we may have to encounter here in this. Thoſe who make their way to heaven through darkneſs and temptations, and force their way through hoſtile bands, will riſe to greater honors there, than though they had aſcended by an eaſier and a ſmoother road. Nothing done or ſuffered in the way of duty will looſe its reward. God hath not ſaid "ſeek ye my face in vain."

"WHEREFORE, brethren give diligence to make your calling and election ſure; for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall; for ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jeſus Chriſt. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen."

SERMON V.

Abram's Horror of great Darkness.

GENESIS xv. 12.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

IF we conſider the ſketch, given us in ſcripture, of the life of this patriarch, we ſhall find that few have had equal manifeſtations of the divine favor. But the light did not at all times ſhine on him. He had his dark hours while dwelling in this ſtrange land. Here we find *an horror of great darkneſs to have fallen upon him.* The language uſed to deſcribe his ſtate, on this occaſion, is ſtrong. It expreſſes more than the want of God's ſenſible preſence. It deſcribes a ſtate ſimilar to that of the pſalmiſt, "While I ſuffer thy terrors I am diſtracted." His ſufferings probably bore an affinity to thoſe of the Savior when the father hid his face from him; at which period there was more than the withdrawing of his ſenſible preſence, the powers of darkneſs were ſuffered to terrify and afflict him—"It was their hour"—God had left him in their hands. So Abram on this occaſion.

JUST before God had ſmiled upon him—"Fear not, Abram: I am thy ſhield, and thy exceeding great reward." Then all was light and love. "The candle of the Lord ſhone on his head." When he complained that he had no child to comfort him, or inherit his poſſeſſions, God promiſed him an heir, and a countleſs progeny—"Look now toward heaven and tell the ſtars, if thou be able to number them—So ſhall thy ſeed be. And he believed the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteouſneſs." What an occaſion of joy? What ſtrange manifeſtations of divine favor? They are ſcarcely paralleled in the hiſtory of man.

BUT how ſudden the reverſe? The ſame day—*when the ſun was going down;* lo! the brightneſs diſappears, and *an horror of great darkneſs fell upon him.*

A DEEP *ſleep fell upon Abram.* This was not a natural ſleep. There is no probability that he would have given way to weakneſs, and fallen into a common ſleep, while engaged in covenanting with God; binding himſelf with ſolemn engagements, and receiving tokens of the divine favor, and the promiſe of bleſſings for a great while to come. If he could have ſlept while receiving ſuch manifeſtations of the divine friendſhip, it is not probable that his dreams would have been terrifying: His ſituation would rather have inſpired joyful ſenſations, and excited pleaſing expectations.

THAT which for want of language more pertinent and expreſſive, is here termed ſleep, ſeems to

have been a divine ecſtaſy—ſuch influence of the holy ſpirit operating on the ſoul, as locked it up from every thing earthly, and ſhut out worldly things, as effectually as a deep ſleep, which ſhuts up the ſoul and cloſeth all its avenues, ſo that nothing terreſtrial can find admittance.

THIS was often experienced by the prophets, when God revealed himſelf to them, and made known his will. Thus Daniel, when the angel Gabriel was ſent to ſolve his doubts, and let him into futurity—"Now as he was ſpeaking with me, I was in a deep ſleep on my face toward the ground." The holy prophet, filled with fear at the approach of the celeſtial meſſenger, could not have fallen aſleep, like ſome careleſs attendant in the houſe of God. Yet ſuch is the language uſed to expreſs his ſituation at that time, and afterwards on a ſimilar occaſion.* The three diſciples, who witneſſed the transfiguration, experienced ſimilar ſenſations—ſenſations which abſorbed the ſoul, and ſhut out terreſtrial objects, which the evangeliſt compares to ſleep.

BUT why was Abram's joy, occaſioned by the communications of the morning, ſo ſoon turned to horror.

THE reaſons are with him "whoſe judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out." We may obſerve, however, that ſuch is the way of God with man, while here on trial. If at any time a perſon ſeems peculiarly favored of heaven, ſomething of a different nature is commonly ſet

* Daniel viii. 18. x. 9.

over againſt it. Perhaps to remind him that this is not his reſt. We ſeldom enjoy proſperity without a ſenſible mixture of adverſity; or without ſomewhat adverſe following in quick ſucceſſion. "Even in laughter, the heart is ſorrowful, and the end of mirth is heavineſs." Neither are ſpecial trials or ſorrows ſent alone; comforts and conſolations are uſually joined with them, or ſoon ſucceed them. If we conſider the matter, we ſhall obſerve this in ourſelves; and may often diſcover it in others. We ſee it in the hiſtory of this patriarch, and that of many of his deſcendants.

THE pilgrimage of Jacob, how remarkably diverſified with good and evil, with joy and ſorrow? That alſo of Joſeph—of Moſes—of Daniel? At times each of theſe were raiſed high and brought low—ſometimes found themſelves at the ſummit of earthly honor and felicity; at other times, were caſt down, and hope ſeemed ready to forſake them.

IN the hiſtory of Job the ſame things are exemplified in ſtill ſtronger colors. That holy man experienced the extremes of honor and infamy, joy and grief, hope and terror. The prophets and apoſtles, paſſed through ſcenes in many reſpects ſimilar; their joys and ſorrows were contraſted to each other. Daniel's mournings and faſtings were followed with remarkable diſcoveries and cheering revelations; but the divine communications were almoſt too ſtrong for frail humanity; they filled him with diſmay, and had well nigh deſtroyed his mortal body. "He fainted and was ſick certain days."

ST. PAUL was "caught up into paradiſe and heard unſpeakable words, which it was not poſſible for a man to utter"—had a view of the ineffable glory of the upper world; but trials no leſs remarkable, and very ſevere, were contraſted to thoſe ſtrange diſtinctions, and more than earthly joys! "Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan to buffet me, leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure."*

ST. JOHN ſuffered ſore perſecutions—was baniſhed from the ſociety of his fellow Chriſtians, if not from the ſociety of men. But divine diſcoveries repaid all his ſufferings—heaven's ineffable glories were opened to his view! What he witneſſed could be but very partially communicated. Language is weak; only faint hints and general intimations could be given of the "glory which is to be revealed." But the ſuffering apoſtle enjoyed it, and was ſupported, yea, enraptured by it.

THIS life is filled with changes. Good and evil, hope and fear, light and darkneſs, are ſet over againſt each other. The ſaints, while they dwell in the duſt, ſometimes walk in darkneſs, and have their hours of gloom and horror—"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now—Even thoſe who have the firſt fruits of the ſpirit, groan within themſelves, waiting for—the redemption of the body. Thoſe of whom the world is not worthy, are often in heavineſs, through manifold temptations."

* 2 Corinthians, xii. 4—7.

WE may wonder at theſe things; but when we conſider them as ordered of God, the conſideration ſhould calm our minds, and bring us to ſay with the aſtoniſhed Shunamite of old, "It is well."*

GOD doth not order ſorrows to his creatures here, becauſe he delights in their ſufferings. "He grieves not willingly, neither afflicts the children of men. He doth it for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holineſs." And which of the ſaints hath not received benefit from it? Who among them hath not ſometimes been ready to adopt the language of the pſalmiſt, "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted."

"BORN of the earth, we are earthly"—our affections naturally deſcend. We are prone to ſet our affections on temporal things, and ſet up our reſt where there is no abiding. Therefore do we need afflictions to keep us mindful of our ſituation. Such remains of depravity are left in the renewed, that proſperity often corrupts them. But for the ſorrows and ſufferings ordered out to them, they would forget God and loſe themſelves among the deceitful cares, and infatuating allurements of this ſtrange land.

INTERVALS of comfort are alſo needful for them. Were theſe denied them, "the ſpirits would fail before God, and the ſouls which he hath made." And intervals of light and joy are given to refreſh, and cheer, and animate them to the duties required in this land of darkneſs and doubt. But they are not intended to ſatisfy. They anſwer like

* 2 Kings, iv. 26.

ends to the Chriſtian during his earthly pilgrimage, as the fruits of Canaan, carried by the ſpies into the wilderneſs did to Iſrael while journeying toward the land of promiſe—ſerve to give them a glance of the good things prepared for them, to increaſe their longings after them, and animate them to preſs forward and make their way to the poſſeſſion.

SUCH may be ſome of the reaſons of thoſe varied ſcenes through which the people of God are doomed to make their way to glory.

OFTEN the ſaints find themſelves unable to penetrate the deſign of heaven in the trials through which lies their way—eſpecially in the hidings of God's face, ſo that they cannot diſcover him. This made no ſmall part of Job's trial—"Behold I go forward but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himſelf on the right hand that I cannot ſee him." Could he have known the reaſons of his trials it would have been a great conſolation, but it was denied him, and the reaſons of God's hiding his face from him, no leſs than thoſe of his other trials.

So it is alſo with others. The darkneſs which involves them makes part of their trials. It is a common trial of the ſaints. God will have his people "live by faith and walk by faith." To live by faith, implies want of ſight, and ignorance of the deſigns of providence. A great part of the good man's trial here, conſiſts in truſting God with-

out knowing why ſuch things are required, or ſuch trials ordered out to him. In this way the ſaints had great trials under the former diſpenſations. A veil was then ſpread over the method of grace, or way in which God would bring ſalvation to men. Even the religious rites enjoined by the law, were not underſtood, though they made part of the duties of every day; they remained myſterious, till Chriſt removed the covering caſt over them; made known the hidden myſtery, and opened "the way into the holieſt by his blood."

UNDER every diſpenſation religion greatly conſiſts in referring every thing to God, and truſting in him, without being let into his deſigns, or knowing reaſons of his orders. "Bleſſed is he who hath not ſeen, and yet hath believed"—Bleſſed is he who without penetrating the deſigns of heaven truſts in God, and conforms to his requirements, not doubting but all will turn out right—that God will lead him in right ways, though they may be ways which he knows not.

ABRAM diſcovered much of this temper—in obedience to divine order he left his father's houſe, and "went forth, not knowing whither he went." And afterwards, when commanded of God, he took a three days journey, to offer his ſon, Iſaac, at the place which ſhould be ſhewn him.

THE trial of this patriarch, recorded in the text, might be, at that time particularly neceſſary. God had then admitted him to a ſpecial nearneſs; and ſpecial trials might be requiſite to keep him humble, and prevent high thoughts of himſelf. For

ſuch is fallen human nature, that particular diſtinctions, even divine communications, though of grace, are apt to be abuſed; to foſter pride! Though man is poor and dependant, pride is a ſin which very eaſily beſets him. If Paul needed ſomething to keep him humble when favored with revelations, why not Abram? Abram was then in the body—compaſſed with infirmity—liable to temptation, and prone to ſeduction. God knew his ſtate—corrected him therefore, to give him a ſenſe of demerit, when he received him into covenant and engaged to be his God.

ANOTHER deſign of his darkneſs and horror at that time, might be to fill him with awe and reverence of the divine majeſty. Had he experienced nothing of this kind, the ſtrange familiarity to which he had been admitted of the moſt high, might have diminiſhed his fear of God, and cauſed him to think lightly of the great ſupreme.

THE horror and diſtreſs he now experienced, might alſo ſerve to prepare him for holy joy, when God ſhould lift on him the light of his countenance. Light and joy are moſt refreſhing when they follow darkneſs and terror. Therefore the joy of thoſe who have been pricked at their hearts for ſin and made to know its exceeding ſinfulneſs, when they are brought to hope in divine mercy, and believe themſelves forgiven of God. There is reaſon to believe that the ſorrows of this ſtate will give a zeſt to the joys of heaven—the darkneſs of this ſtate, to the light of that in which darkneſs is done away—the fear and concern here

experienced, to the ſecurity and perfect ſafety of the Canaan which is above.

SOME think that what Abram experienced on this occaſion was intended to intimate God's future dealings with his family. They were honored by being taken into covenant with God, but were to paſs through the horror and darkneſs of Egyptian bondage—the diſtreſſes of a wilderneſs ſtate, and a war with the Amorites, before they ſhould enjoy the promiſed land. Some conceive Abram's ſufferings at this time, deſigned to prefigure the legal diſpenſation, under which his ſeed were to continue long, and ſuffer many things. However this might be, we know that Abram did not find reſt in this weary land, unallayed with ſorrow. He was doomed to make his way through darkneſs, doubts and difficulties.

SUCH was the portion of this father of the faithful, while he remained in the body and continued on trial. The ſame is the portion of all the ſaints. "This is not their reſt, becauſe it is polluted." Reſt is not to be found on earth. When the remains of ſin ſhall be purged away, there will be no more darkneſs, fear or horror. "The former things will paſs away."

THESE conſiderations teach us what we have to expect while we tabernacle in clay—namely, trials and difficulties, doubts and darkneſs—theſe muſt be here our portion. Though we may be children of God, we are not to expect exemption from them till the earthly houſe of our tabernacle is diſſolved and we are clothed on with our houſe which is from heaven.

THOSE who are ſtrangers to religion may flatter themſelves that ſhould they attain renewing grace and get evidence of it, they ſhould no more ſuffer from fear or horror, or the hidings of God's face, but that God would ſmile inceſſantly upon them and cauſe them to go on their way rejoicing. But this is far from being the caſe. Though when perſons firſt attain a hope towards God, they are glad, their joy is ſoon interrupted—doubts and fears ariſe—their way is dark—"God hideth his face that they cannot behold him. O that I were as in months paſt—when God preſerved me—when his candle ſhined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkneſs—when the Almighty was yet with me."

THIS hath been the complaint of many others beſide benighted Job. It is often the language of the ſaints while in this dark world. "God often hides his face from thoſe whom his ſoul loves, ſo that they walk on and are ſad." This makes them long for heaven, becauſe there "will be no night there, neither ſorrow, nor crying, nor any more death."

IN this life ſanctification is imperfect. The ſaints carry about in them a "body of death." While this continues, they cannot have uninterrupted peace, but muſt have intervals of darkneſs and doubt. Thoſe who have gone before us have often been troubled and diſtreſſed, and gone on their way ſorrowing.

THIS is the fruit of ſin. Man was doomed to it at the apoſtacy. It hath been from that time the

portion of humanity. None hath been exempted. Thoſe whom St. John ſaw walking in white robes and rejoicing in glory, had "come out of great tribulation."

WE can hope for nothing better than to "be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes." We muſt travel the ſame road and can promiſe ourſelves no better accommodations on our journey. If Abram, the friend of God, felt *horror of great darkneſs*, after he had been called of God, we have no reaſon to expect trials leſs ſevere.

LET us not be diſcouraged, or faint in our minds. The way to glory lies through this dreary land—to us there is no other way. But the end will be light. If we keep heaven in our eye, and preſs on unmoved by the difficulties, and unawed by the dangers which lie in our way, "our labor will not be in vain in the Lord." God will be with us. He will not leave us comfortleſs; but will ſupport us under difficulties and guard us to his kingdom. After we ſhall have ſuffered awhile, he will call us from our labors, and reward us with eternal rewards. "Then ſhall we obtain joy gladneſs, and ſorrow and mourning ſhall flee away." And the time is ſhort.

"HE which teſtifieth theſe things, ſaith, ſurely I come quickly. Amen." May we have ſuch evidence of an intereſt in him, as may diſpoſe us to anſwer, "Even ſo come Lord Jeſus.

SERMON VI.

Divine Impartiality considered.

ROMANS ii. 11.

For there is no respect of persons with God.

THE divine impartiality is often asserted in the holy scriptures; and the assertion coincides with our natural ideas of deity. The pagans indeed attributed to their Gods, the vices, follies and weaknesses of men! But the beings whom they adored were mostly taken from among men, and might be considered as retaining human imperfections.—Had unbiassed reason been consulted to find out a supreme being, a different object would have been exhibited to view. But it is natural to mankind to fancy the deity such an one as themselves.

THE origin of many erroneous conceptions of the divinity may be found in the persons who entertain them. To the jaundiced eye, objects appear discolored. To a mind thoroughly depraved, the source of truth may seem distorted. Therefore the hope of the Epicure—therefore the portrait which some have drawn of the divine sovereign, rather resembling an earthly despot, than the Jehovah of the bible!

YET God is visible in his works and ways. "They are fools and without excuse, who say, there is no God." And as far as God appears in the works of creation and providence, he appears as he is. Passion, prejudice, or depravity may disfigure or hide him; but as far as the discoveries which God hath made of himself are received, his true character is discerned.

OF this character impartiality constitutes an essential part. "God is a rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

THIS representation agrees with reason. According to his sense of it, every man will subscribe it. Yet different apprehensions are entertained respecting the divine impartiality, as respecting every thing else. The ideas which some receive, others reject as unreasonable. This is not strange. Minds differ, no less than bodies.

WE propose, with deference, now to *exhibit our views of this interesting subject, the divine impartiality*, especially as it respects man.

This is the branch of divine impartiality referred to in the text, and commonly in the scriptures —*There is no respect of* PERSONS *with God.*

IT is important that we form just apprehensions on this subject. Mistakes might inspire groundless expectations, and occasion practical errors, dishonorable to God, and mischeivous to man. But those which are just, have a tendency to produce sentiments of rational respect and reverence for the supreme Governor and to point to the way of peace and blessedness.

IMPARTIALITY doth not require an equality of powers or advantages—that creatures ſhould in this view be treated alike, or made equal. Infinite wiſdom and power are not reſtricted to a ſameneſs in their plaſtic operations, or providential apportionments. Neither is this ſameneſs the order of heaven.

THE number of creatures is great. We cannot reckon them up in order; nor the different ſpecies. Among the myriads of the ſame ſpecies, are diſcriminations, ſufficient to diſtinguiſh them from one another. We obſerve this in our race, and in the creatures beneath us. Among mankind theſe differences are moſt noticeable and moſt intereſting. They relate to every thing which belongs to man—to the mind, and to the body, and to the powers of each—to the temper—appetites—paſſions—talents—trials—opportunities, and means of information. There is in every reſpect an almoſt infinite variety—differences which run into innumerable particulars. Variety may be conſidered as a diſtinguiſhing trait in the works, and ways of God. And all is right. When we conſider the hand of God and his providential influence in them, we ſeem conſtrained to adopt the language of the pſalmiſt, "O Lord how many are thy works? In wiſdom haſt thou made them all: The earth is full of thy riches."

THESE are diſplays of divine ſovereignty. They are beyond our comprehenſion. "We ſee, but we underſtand not." Of many things brought into being by divine efficiency, we know neither

the design nor use—can only say, "Thou Lord, hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

THE same observation is applicable to the different situations in which God hath placed creatures of the same class, and the different talents committed to them. God hath doubtless his reasons for these discriminations, but hath not revealed them.

BY nothing of this kind is the divine impartiality affected; with none of them is it concerned. God is pleased to try some with ten talents, others with five, others with only one. That "so it seems good in his sight," is all we know about it; and all we need to know. Should we attempt to pry into it, the answer given by our Lord to an officious enquirer respecting another, might be applied—"What is that to thee?"

THE divine impartiality is only concerned to apportion the rule of duty to the powers and advantages imparted, and to give to each one according to the manner in which he shall have conformed to the rule given to direct him, making no difference, other than they may have acted differently the parts assigned them, or had more or fewer talents.

IF this definition of impartiality is just, we may infer that God requires of man only "according to that which he hath;" and that in the final adjustment nothing will be done by partiality, or preferring one before another.

COULD not theſe be predicated of the ſupreme governor, we would not attempt to vindicate his character as an impartial being. The latter we conceive chiefly reſpected in the text. Shall treat of each briefly.

THAT God requires of man only "according to that which he hath," is equally the language of reaſon and revelation. Our Savior teacheth, that the divine rule will be the ſame, in this reſpect, as that which governs good men—"Unto whom much is given, of him ſhall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they aſk the more."

THE apoſtle had a particular referrence in the text to the deciſions at the great day, when "every one muſt give account to God, and receive the deeds done in the body"—and inſiſts that the ſituation in which each perſon had been placed, and the rule given for his direction will then be brought into the reckoning, and that each one will be judged, and his ſtate determined by the law, under which he had lived and acted during his probation. This is the ſpirit of the context from verſe ſixth to the ſixteenth, incluſive. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by a patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, and honor and immortality, eternal life: But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile: But glory, and

honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile. *For there is no reſpect of perſons with God.* For as many as have ſinned without law, ſhall alſo periſh without law; and as many as have ſinned in the law ſhall be judged by the law. (For not the hearers of the law are juſt before God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another.) In the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men, by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my goſpel."

THIS whole paragraph is an illuſtration of divine juſtice and impartiality, as exerciſed toward mankind. It ſhews that they are here for trial—that thoſe who act uprightly will meet the divine approbation, and be rewarded with eternal rewards; but that a contentious diſregard of duty, and wilful continuance in known wickedneſs will be the object of divine indignation, which will occaſion tribulation and anguiſh—that in the deciſions at the great day, family and national diſtinctions will be diſregarded—that it will be required of every one according to the talents committed to him, and no more, whether he be Jew or Gentile.

SOME have doubted whether theſe left to the light of nature could poſſibly meet the divine ap-

probation and find mercy with God; or were not doomed without remedy to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. This we apprehend to be here determined. "Those who have not the law, may do by nature, the things contained in the law; and the doers of the law shall be justified."

By "doing the law," no more is intended than acting sincerely, according to the light imparted. Perfect obedience is not attainable by imperfect creatures—cannot therefore be here intended by the apostle. His evident meaning is, that sincerity is accepted of God, and rewarded with the rewards of grace, and equally of the Gentile, as of the Jew; *for there is no respect of persons with God.*

ADULTS, privileged with gospel light, must believe and obey the gospel. To them is that declaration addressed—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This hath no relation to those who have not the means of faith. "What the law saith, it saith to those who are under it." The same is true of the gospel.

THE equal justice of God in giving to every one acording to his works, or to his improvement of talents, is the spirit of the text and context, and of many other scriptures. Yea, this one of those great truths which are borne on the face of revelation—"If ye call on the Father, who, *without respect of persons*, judgeth every man according to his works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

SOME objections to the preceding definition of divine impartiality are ſubjoined, with very brief replies.

IT is ſaid "We muſt be born again or we cannot ſee the kingdom of God," and regeneration is the work of God, or effect of divine influence.

THAT neceſſary change, is indeed the work of God, but not to the excluſion of human cooperation. The holy ſpirit ſtrives with all who have the means of grace. None are wholly deſtitute of ſupernal influences—of awakenings and convictions, or devoid of power to cheriſh or to reſiſt them. This is intimated in the warnings to beware of grieving or quenching the ſpirit. Could men only oppoſe divine influence in renovation, they would never be exhorted of God "to make themſelvs new hearts, and turn themſelves that they may live." *

BUT natural men are ſaid to be "dead in ſin"—and can the dead do aught which tends to their own reſurrection?

THE renewed are ſaid to be "dead to ſin"—Can they do nothing which tends to wickedneſs? † Metaphors muſt be underſtood with latitude. We ſhould involve ourſelves in many abſurdities, by always adhering to the literal ſenſe of thoſe uſed in ſcripture. Were we to adhere in all caſes to the literal ſenſe, we ſhould believe Chriſt to be a rock, a door, a vine, and receive the Romiſh doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

* Ezekiel xviii. 31. † Romans vi. 2, 11.

BUT is not "every imagination of the thoughts of ſinners hearts," ſaid in ſcripture to "be only evil continually?"

SUCH is ſaid to have been the ſtate of antediluvian ſinners, when the ſpirit had ceaſed to ſtrive with them, agreeably to the threatening.* It is a repreſentation of the laſt grade of human depravity; but not applicable to every natural man. Thoſe who are unrenewed are not all equally depraved. Some "are not far from the kingdom of God."—In ſome are things lovely in the Savior's eyes. "Then Jeſus, beholding him, loved him."†

IT is further aſked, Whether every motion toward a return to God, is not the effect of divine influence? And whether divine influence doth not neceſſarily produce effect?—We anſwer,

To ſuppoſe man not capable of acting, but only of being acted on, or acted with, is to exculpate his enmity againſt God, and oppoſition to his law and goſpel. To ſuppoſe his enmity and oppoſition to be the effect of divine influence, is to excuſe them. Blame reſts with the efficient. The creature cannot be culpable, becauſe he is what God made him; or while he remains what he was made of God. To denominate either temper or conduct morally good or evil, conſent is neceſſary. to ſuppoſe conſent, in the creature, to be the effect of almighty power operating upon it, nullifies it to the creature, in a moral view. The work of God cannot be the ſin, or holineſs, of the creature.

* Geneſis vi. 3. † Mark xii. 34. x. 21.

BUT depravity and wickedneſs are wrong, and criminal, apart from all conſideration of their ſource—they are ſo in themſelves.

THEY cannot therefore be from God, but muſt have ſome other ſource. The creature which vitiates another, is viewed as culpable, though it only tempts to wickedneſs, which is all a creature can do to vitiate another, and leaves the tempted ability to retain integrity; what muſt then be our views of a being whom we conceive to produce the ſame effect *by an exertion of Almighty power?* —"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Is it then ſuppoſeable that he can produce it by direct efficiency?

BUT ſuppoſe him to produce it. Suppoſe it to derive immediately from him. Is its nature altered? Is it leſs criminal or odious?

GOD forbid that we ſhould make the ſuppoſition! It is a compound of abſurdity and blaſphemy! As well may we ſuppoſe the ſun to diffuſe darkneſs! They "truſted in lying words, who ſaid of old, We are delivered to do abominations." We fear the Lord; "and will aſcribe righteouſneſs to our Maker."

BUT doth not God chooſe ſome to eternal life, and to this end bring them into his kingdom, and leave others to periſh in their ſins?

GOD chooſeth thoſe who hear his voice, and cheriſh the divine influences, and leaves thoſe who refuſe his grace and grieve his ſpirit. "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock; *if any man hear my voice, and open the door*, I will come in to him,

and ſup with him, and he with me. Every one that aſketh receiveth; he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it is opened." Aſking is antecedent to receiving; ſeeking, to finding; and knocking is the work of thoſe yet without. When trembling, aſtoniſhed Saul, of Tarſus enquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he was directed by one ſent of Chriſt—"The Lord ſaid to Ananias, Ariſe—go—enquire—for one called Saul of Tarſus: *For, behold, he prayeth.*"

IT is further aſked, Whether God doth not act as a ſovereign, in his choice of thoſe whom he ſanctifies and ſaves?

GOD acts as a wiſe and impartial ſovereign. God is not a ſovereign in the ſenſe in which moſt earthly monarchs are ſo. Whim, caprice, paſſion, prejudice often influence their preferences of ſome to others. Not ſo the divine ſovereign. There are reaſons for all his diſcriminations. They may be veiled at preſent from our view; but will one day appear—"The day will declare them," and juſtify God in them.*

BUT the elect, it is ſaid, "are choſen from the foundations of the world; before they have done either good or evil."

ELECTION is indeed, "according to foreknowledge." "Whom God did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

BUT God could not foreknow, ſay ſome, how a free moral agent would act, unleſs he had firſt determined how he ſhould act!

* 1 Corinthians iii. 13.

A FREE *moral agent, all whose volitions and actions, are fixed by an immutable decree!* We are ignorant how God knows, or how he foreknows. Perhaps past and future relate only to creatures. Every thing may be present to the divine mind—with God there may be *an eternal Now.* "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Much which is known to us, is locked up from creatures below us—they can form no ideas about it. Still less do we know of God, or the manner of the divine perceptions. The distance between God and us, is infinitely greater than between us and creatures of the lowest grade. It is therefore impossible for us to make deductions from the divine perceptions, or determine any thing about them. When tempted to it we should remember the caution given by Zophar, —"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?*"

BUT as the whole human race are sinners, deserving only of punishment, is not God at liberty to choose from among them, whom he pleaseth to sanctify and save, and pass by, and leave whom he pleaseth, to punish in their sins?

WE have no claim on divine justice. All mankind might have been left to perish. But they are not thus left of God. He hath found a ransom; and offers salvation to all. No differences will be

* Job xi. 7, 8.

eventually made among men without reaſons. And the reaſons will be in them—*For there is no reſpect of perſons with God.*

BUT ſuppoſe two perſons to be equally guilty and deſerving of condemnation, may not God make one of them a veſſel of mercy, and the other a veſſel of wrath? Would the latter have occaſion to complain? Or could injuſtice be charged on God?

WE ſhould not dare to charge him with injuſtice, did we know ſuch a caſe to happen—neither do we preſume to determine what God hath a right to do. But we are ſure that no ſuch caſe ever will happen—that God will not make an eventual difference in thoſe who are alike. *For there is no reſpect of perſons with God.*

SOME may find mercy who may appear to us leſs guilty than ſome others who may periſh in their ſins. But it belongs not to us to eſtimate comparative guilt. It requires omniſcience. "The judge of all the earth will do right."

INFERENCES.

MANKIND are here on trial. Different talents are committed to them. God acts as a ſovereign in apportioning betruſtments, and will obſerve exact impartiality in adjuſting retributions.

THE idea of talents implies ability to improve them. Goſpel applications ſpeak ſuch to be our ſtate—they are adopted to no other ſtate.

THE fataliſt, and thoſe who conceive every human volition and action to be the effect of divine agency, have no rational motive, to do,

or ſuffer for religion. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

HOWEVER we may amuſe ourſelves with idle ſpeculations, this life is a probation ſeaſon.—Our uſe or abuſe of the talents we poſſeſs will determine us to happineſs, or miſery, honor or infamy.

"ALL have ſinned, and are guilty before God—In his ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified"—our ſole deſert is puniſhment. But God hath had mercy on us—provided a Savior, and offers us ſalvation. The offer is univerſal—"Whoſoever will let him come."

THAT *there is no reſpect of perſons with God*, is alike the dictate of reaſon and revelation. We have only to act with integrity before God, relying on his grace in Chriſt, and his grace will be ſufficient for us.

THE man who had the one talent, neglected it, under pretence that he ſerved a hard maſter, who required things unreaſonable and impoſſible—he was condemned; but *only* for neglecting the talent which he poſſeſſed.

IT is required of a man according to that which he hath—this he can render—the neglect will be fatal. "We muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that we may receive the deeds done in the body, according to that which we have done, whether good or bad. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or evil.

AN unſeen hand is conſtantly writing down our volitions and actions, to be reſerved to judgment.

Ere long the books will be opened, which will open every heart, and life. Not a circumſtance which goes to conſtitute a ſtate of trial, will be omitted—all will be brought into the reckoning, and ſerve to determine our eternal ſtate.

THAT ſtate will be determined by the uſe which we ſhall have made of life, and the advantages which we enjoyed in it. The divine impartiality will then appear—"The ungodly will be convinced of their ungodly deeds—and of their hard ſpeeches, which they have ſpoken againſt God." None will complain of injuſtice—none of the condemned pretend that they receive aught, which others circumſtanced as they were, and acting as they acted, would not have received from the hand that made them. "Every mouth will be ſtopped."

THIS, fellow mortals is our ſeed time for eternity. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap—whatſoever good thing any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free—every man ſhall receive his own reward, according to his own labor."

NOT only the ſtate into which we are to enter at death, but the rank we are to hold in it depend on preſent improvement. All the ſanctified will be ſaved; all who die unrenewed will be damned. But there will be different grades, both in the upper and lower worlds. Of the ſaints, ſome "will be ſcarcely ſaved." To others "will be miniſtered an abundant entrance into the kingdom of

Chriſt." There are alſo greateſt and leaſt in the kingdom of heaven. And among thoſe exiled the world of light, differences will be made, ſuited to the different degrees of criminality. Capernaum will receive a more intolerable doom than Sodom.*

ALL theſe diſcriminations will be built on the preſent life, and riſe out of it. This will be ſo abundantly manifeſted, "when God ſhall judge the world in righteouſneſs," that an aſſembled univerſe will confeſs, That *there is no reſpect of perſons with God.*

* Matthew xi. 23, 24.

SERMON VII.

Moses' Prayer to be blotted out of God's Book.

EXODUS xxxii. 31, 32.

d Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh! this people ave sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of old. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if ot, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

HIS is one of the moſt difficult paſſages in the ly ſcriptures. Many have attempted to explain and in our apprehenſion, failed in the attempt. me will entertain like opinion of the following. rhaps juſtly. We are no leſs fallible than iers.

IN matters which have engaged the attention of learned, and in which they have differed, aſſur- ce is not perhaps to be expected. But as we forbidden to call any man maſter, we have ıtured to judge for ourſelves reſpecting the aning of the text, and now lay before the read- he reſult of our attention to it; not wiſhing to rude our opinion upon him; but leaving him orm his own as he may find occaſion.

SOME ſuppoſe that a perſon muſt be willing to be damned for the glory of God, or he cannot be ſaved; and this ſcripture hath been alledged in proof. After a few obſervations, *to ſhew that the ſuppoſition is erroneous and abſurd; we ſhall exhibit the various conſtructions which have been put on the text, by ſeveral expoſitors; then give our own ſenſe of it; and cloſe with a few reflections.*

THE ſuppoſition that man muſt be willing to be damned, in order to be ſaved, is in our apprehenſion, erroneous and abſurd. It ſuppoſes a deſire of God's favor to be an unpardonable offence; and a contempt of it a recommendation to his regard! It ſuppoſes that God will baniſh thoſe from his preſence who long for it; and bring thoſe to dwell in it who do not deſire it! A ſuppoſition, which, in our view, carries its own confutation in it. For the all important inquiry is, confeſſedly, how to obtain ſalvation? The ſolution which the ſuppoſition exhibits, is this, *by being willing not to obtain it!*

GOD cannot iſſue an order, making it the duty of man to be willing to be damned. To be willing to be damned, implies a willingneſs to diſobey God, refuſe his grace, and continue in unbelief and impenitence! Should we ſuppoſe it poſſible for God to iſſue the order, obedience would be impoſſible, and equally to thoſe of every character.

THE hardened ſinner, cannot ſurely be thought capable of love to God, which will diſpoſe him to ſuffer eternally for God's glory. He may do that

which will occaſion eternal ſufferings, but not out of obedience to God—not with deſign to glorify him.

NEITHER can the awakened ſinner be conſidered as the ſubject of ſuch love to God. Awakened ſinners are not lovers of God. They ſee indeed the evil of ſin, and are ſenſible of its demerit—that they deſerve deſtruction. But this doth not reconcile them to deſtruction, and make them willing to receive it. They tremble at the thoughts of it, ſtrive againſt ſin, and cry after deliverance. Were they willing to be damned, they would not be afraid of being damned, or ſeek in any way to avoid it.

IT is equally impoſſible for the ſaint to be reconciled to damnation, as will appear, by conſidering what it implies. It implies the total loſs of the divine image, and baniſhment from the divine preſence and favor! It implies being given up to the power of apoſtate ſpirits, and conſigned to the ſame dreary dungeon of deſpair and horror, which is prepared for them! It implies being doomed to welter in woe unutterable, blaſpheming God, and execrating the creatures of God, "world without end!"

WHEN people pretend that they are willing to be damned for the glory of God, they "know not what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm." They leave out the principal ingredients of that dreadful ſtate. Did they take them into the account, they would perceive the impoſſibility of the thing. To ſuppoſe it required is to blaſpheme

God—to pretend that man can ſubmit to it, is to belie human nature—to conceive that a child of God can reconcile himſelf to it, is to ſubvert every juſt idea of true religion. To require it, God muſt deny himſelf! To conſent to it, man muſt conſent to become an infernal! The ſtatement of the caſe is a refutation of the ſcheme.

BUT if God's glory requires it, will not this reconcile the good and gain their conſent?

GOD's glory doth not—cannot require it. "The ſpirit of the Lord is not ſtraitened." Human guilt and miſery are not neceſſary to God's honor.

IT is neceſſary that divine juſtice ſhould be exerciſed on thoſe who refuſe divine grace; but not neceſſary that men ſhould refuſe divine grace. "As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

SUCH is the language of revelation; and the meaſures which God hath adopted relative to our guilty race ſpeak the ſame language. He hath provided a city of refuge, and urges the guilty to "turn to the ſtrong hold."—He weeps over obſtinate ſinners who refuſe his grace—"How ſhall I give thee up? How ſhall I deliver thee?" But rejoiceth over the penitent, as the father rejoiced over the returning prodigal.

GOD would not have provided a Savior, and made indiſcriminate offers of pardon and peace had he choſen the deſtruction of ſinners, and had their ruin been neceſſary to his honor. But God

hath done these things, and manifested this merciful disposition toward mankind.

WE have no need to "do evil that good may come. Our unrighteousness is not necessary to commend the righteousness of God."

How then are we to understand the prayer of Moses, placed at the head of this discourse—*blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written?*

As this is one of the principal passages of scripture which are adduced to support the sentiment we have exploded, a few things may be premised, before we attempt to explain it.

I. SHOULD it be admitted that Moses here imprecated utter destruction on himself, it could not be alleged as a precept given to direct others, but only as a solitary incident, in the history of a saint, who was then compassed with infirmity. And where is the human character without a shade? This same Moses neglected to circumcise his children—broke the tables of God's law—spake unadvisedly with his lips—yea, committed such offences against God, that he was doomed to die short of Canaan, in common with rebellious Israel.

II. THE time in which it hath been particularly insisted that a person must be willing to be damned for God's glory, is at his entrance on a state of grace; but Moses had been consecrated to the service of God long before he made this prayer. Nothing, therefore respecting the temper of those under the preparatory influences of the spirit can be argued from it.

III. SHOULD we grant that Moſes here imprecated on himſelf the greateſt evil, a ſenſe of other people's ſins, and not a ſenſe of his own ſins, was the occaſion. But,

IV. No ſufferings of his could have been advantageous to others, had he ſubmitted to them for their ſake. Had he conſented to have been a caſtaway—to have become an infernal, as we have ſeen implied in damnation, this would not have brought ſalvation to Iſrael. Moſes' hatred of God, and his ſufferings, and blaſphemies, would not have atoned for the ſins of his people, or tended in any degree to turn away the wrath of God from them.

IT ſeems ſurprizing that the whole train of expoſitors ſhould conſider this good man as imprecating evil on himſelf, for the good of others, when it is obvious that others could not have been benefited by it. For though expoſitors differ reſpecting the magnitude of the evil, they ſeem to agree that he did wiſh evil to himſelf, and pray that he might ſuffer for his people! We have ſeen no expoſitor who is an exception.

BUT let us attend to the prayer. *Oh! this people have ſinned a great ſin; yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their ſin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.*—

WE know the occaſion. Iſrael had fallen into idolatry while Moſes was on the mount—had made an idol, and bowed in adoration before it. God told Moſes what they had done—threatened to deſtroy them—excuſed Moſes from praying for

them, which had before been his duty, and promiſed to reward his faithfulneſs among ſo perverſe a people, if he would now "hold his peace, and let God alone to deſtroy them." But Moſes preferred the good of Iſrael to the aggrandiſement of his own family, earneſtly commended them to the divine mercy, and obtained the forgiveneſs of their ſin—"The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto them." But he gave at that time no intimation of his merciful purpoſe toward them.

WHEN Moſes came down and found the congregation holding a feaſt to their idol, he was filled with grief and indignation; and took meaſures immediately to puniſh their ſin and bring them to repentance. He firſt deſtroyed their idol, and then about three thouſands of the idolators, by the ſword of Levi, who at his call, ranged themſelves on the Lord's ſide. The next day, fearing that God would exterminate the nation, agreeably to his threatening, Moſes gathered the tribes, ſet their ſin before them, and told them that he would return to the divine preſence and plead for them, though he knew not that God would hear him. "Ye have ſinned a great ſin; and now I will go up unto the Lord; *peradventure* I ſhall make an atonement for your ſin. *And Moſes returned unto the Lord and ſaid. Oh! this people have ſinned a great ſin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet, now, if thou wilt, forgive their ſin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou haſt written.*

Moses' meaning, while praying for Israel, is obvious; but the petition offered up for himself is not equally so—*put me, I pray thee, out of the book.*

Four different constructions have been put on this prayer.—Some consider Moses as imprecating damnation on himself, for the good of his people.—Some as praying for annihilation, that they might find mercy.—Some as asking of God that he might die with them, if they should die in the wilderness.—Others, that his name might be blotted out of the page of history, and his memory perish, should Israel be destroyed and not reach the promised land.

"Blot me" (saith Mr. Cruden) "out of the book of life—out of the catalogue, or number of those that shall be saved—wherein Moses does not express what he thought might be done, but rather wisheth, if it were possible, that God would accept of him as a sacrifice in their stead, and by his destruction and annihilation, prevent so great a mischief to them."*

Doct. S. Clark expresseth his sense of the passage to nearly the same effect.

Did Moses then ask to be made an expiatory sacrifice! Or conceive his own ruin could atone for the sin of Israel! Or did he solemnly ask of God what he knew to be so unreasonable that it could not be granted!

There is no hint in the account given of this affair, that Moses entertained a thought of being accepted in Israel's stead. He did not ask to suf-

* Vid. Concordance, under BLOT.

fer, *that they might escape*—he prayed *to be blotted out of God's book*, if his people could not be forgiven—*If thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

MR. POOL considers Moses as praying to be annihilated that Israel might be pardoned! "Blot me out of the book of life—out of the catalogue, or number of those that shall be saved. I suppose Moses doth not wish his eternal damnation, because that state would imply both wickedness in himself and dishonor to God; but his annihilation, or utter loss of this life, and that to come, and all the happiness of both of them. Nor doth Moses simply desire this, but only comparatively expresseth his singular zeal for God's glory, and charity to his people; suggesting that the very thoughts of the destruction of God's people, and the reproach and blasphemy which would be cast upon God by means thereof, were so intolerable to him, that he rather wished, if it were possible, that God would accept him as a sacrifice in their stead, and by his utter destruction prevent so great a mischief."*

COULD the learned and judicious Mr. Pool seriously believe that inspired Moses prayed for annihilation! Or consider him as entertaining a suspicion that a soul could cease to exist! Or could he conceive him as deliberately asking of God to make him an expiatory sacrifice! Or harboring a thought that the sin of his people might be atoned by his being blotted out from among God's works! ——Strange!

* Vid. Pool in locum.

MR. HENRY conſiders Moſes as praying to die with Iſrael, if they muſt die in the wilderneſs—"If they muſt be cut off, let me be cut off with them ——let not the land of promiſe be mine by ſurvivorſhip. God had told Moſes, that if he would not interpoſe, he would make him a great nation—No ſaid Moſes, I am ſo far from deſiring to ſee my name and family, built on the ruins of Iſrael, that I chooſe rather to die with them."*

IF ſuch is the ſpirit of this prayer, Moſes does not appear reſigned to the divine order, but rather peeviſh and fretful at the diſappointment of his hope, which he had till then entertained. He had expected to lead Iſrael to the land of promiſe; if not indulged, ſeems not to have cared what became of himſelf or his family; and is thought here to addreſs his maker, offering diſtinguiſhing favors to him, as Daniel did Belſhazzar—" thy gifts be to thyſelf, and give thy rewards to another—I deſire none of them for myſelf or mine—If Iſrael die in the wilderneſs, let me die with them"—From angry Jonah ſuch a reply to the kind offers of a gracious God might not ſurprize us; but it was not to have been expected from the meekeſt of mankind.

DOCT. HUNTER, in his biographical lectures, explodes the idea of Moſes' aſking to be damned for the ſalvation of Iſrael, and ſhews the abſurdity of that conſtruction of the text, but underſtands him as praying to die himſelf, before ſentence ſhould be executed on his people, if they were not par-

* Vid. Henry in loc.

doned. And in the declaration, *whoſoever hath ſinned againſt me, him will I blot out of my book*, he diſcovers an intimation, that that offending people ſhould die ſhort of the promiſed land! A diſcovery without a clew. This ſin of Iſrael was pardoned. Sentence of death in the wilderneſs was occaſioned by a ſubſequent act of rebellion, as will be ſhewn in the ſequel.*

MR. FIRMIN conſiders Moſes as here praying to be blotted out of the page of hiſtory, if Iſrael were not pardoned; ſo that no record of his name, or the part which he had acted in the ſtation aſſigned him, ſhould be handed down to poſterity. An expoſition differing from the plain language of ſacred hiſtory—*Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou haſt written.* The page of hiſtory is written by man.

SUCH are the conſtructions which have been put on this ſcripture. The conſiderations which have been ſuggeſted, oblige us to reject them all, as founded in miſtake. Our ſenſe of the paſſage, and the reaſons, which in our apprehenſion, ſupport it, will be the ſubject of another diſcourſe.

* Vid. Hunter's Lect. Vol. iv. Lect. iv.

SERMON VIII.

Moses' Prayer to be blotted out of God's Book.

EXODUS xxxii. 31, 32.

And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

IN the preceding diſcourſe we endeavored to ſhow that the idea of being willing to be damned for the glory of God is not found in the text—that the ſentiment is erroneous and abſurd—then adduced the conſtructions which have been put on the text by ſundry expoſitors, and offered reaſons which oblige us to reject them as miſconſtructions.

IT remains, *to give our ſenſe of the paſſage—the grounds on which it reſts—and ſome reflections by way of improvement.*

As to *our ſenſe of the paſſage*—We conceive theſe puzzling words of Moſes to be no other than a prayer for himſelf—that his ſins which might ſtand charged againſt him in the book of God, might *be blotted out,* however God might deal with Iſrael.

"SINS are compared to debts, which are written in the creditor's book, and croſſed, or blotted out, when paid.* Man's ſins are written in the book of God's remembrance, or accounts, out of which all men ſhall be judged hereafter.† And when ſin is pardoned it is ſaid to be blotted out.‡ And not to be found any more, though ſought for."§

WHEN a debtor hath paid a debt, we are at no loſs for his meaning, if he requeſts to be croſſed, or blotted out of the creditor's book; nor would doubt ariſe ſhould one to whom a debt was forgiven prefer like petition. "You will pleaſe to blot me out of your book."

"THOUGH Moſes had taken no part in this ſin of Iſrael, he knew himſelf a ſinner; and when praying for others, it is not likely he would forget himſelf. The occaſion would naturally ſuggeſt the value, yea the neceſſity of forgiveneſs, and diſpoſe him to aſk it of God. When others are puniſhed, or but juſt eſcape puniſhment, we commonly look at home, and conſider our own ſtate; and if we ſee ourſelves in danger, take meaſures to avoid it. To a ſinner the only way of ſafety is, repairing to divine mercy, and obtaining a pardon. That Moſes would be excited to this by a view of Iſrael, at this time, is a reaſonable expectation.

THAT ſuch was the purport of Moſes' prayer for himſelf is clearly indicated by the anſwer which was given to it—for the *blotting out of God's book*, is doubtleſs to be underſtood in the ſame

* Matthew vi. 32. † Revelations xix. 12. ‡ Iſaiah xliv. 22. § Jeremiah l. 20.—Vid. Cruden's Concord. under BLOT.

ſenſe in the prayer, and in the anſwer; and the latter explains the former.

Oh! this people have ſinned a great ſin—Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their ſin; and if not—if thou wilt not forgive their ſin—*blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou haſt written. And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes,* WHOSOEVER *hath ſinned againſt me,* HIM *will I blot out of my book:* THEREFORE *now go lead the people unto the place of which I have ſpoken unto thee.*

THE paſſage thus preſented to our view, ſeems ſcarcely to need a comment; but ſuch ſad work hath been made of this text, and ſuch ſtrange concluſions been drawn from it, that it may be proper to ſubjoin a few remarks.

THAT God had threatened to "deſtroy that people, and blot out their name from under heaven—that Moſes had prayed for them—and that "the Lord had repented of the evil which he thought to do unto them" we have ſeen above. And here Moſes is ordered to reſume his march, and carry up the tribes to the promiſed land, and the reaſon is aſſigned—"*whoſoever* hath ſinned againſt me, *him* will I blot out of my book, *therefore*, now go lead the people to the place of which I have ſpoken unto thee."

WHEN we thus view the ſubject can a doubt remain reſpecting the ſenſe of this text? But (keeping in view the reaſon here aſſigned for the renewed order given to Moſes to conduct the tribes to Canaan, namely, God's determination *to blot out of his book whoſoever had ſinned againſt him*, in this

affair) let us try it in the different ſenſes which have been put upon it.

I. WE will ſuppoſe *blotting out of God's book*, to mean deſtroying ſoul and body in hell. The divine determination to ſhew no mercy to Iſrael, is then the reaſon aſſigned for the order here given to Moſes. The prayer and anſwer ſtand thus—*Now if thou wilt, forgive this people*—Anſwer—*I will not hear thy prayer for them—no mercy ſhall be ſhewn them, but utter, eternal deſtruction ſhall be their portion*—THEREFORE *now go lead them to the promiſed land!*

II. SUPPOSE *blotting out of God's book* to mean annihilation, and his anſwer to the prayer ſtands thus—*I will deſtroy this people, and blot them from among my works*—THEREFORE *go lead them to the place of which I have ſpoken unto thee!*

III. SUPPOSE with Mr. Henry, and Doct. Hunter, that it is to be underſtood of deſtruction in the wilderneſs, and the anſwer ſtands thus—*My wrath ſhall wax hot againſt Iſrael and conſume them—they ſhall all die in the wilderneſs*, THEREFORE, *now go lead them to Canaan!*

THE whole people, ſave Moſes and Joſhua, ſeem to have participated in the revolt. We have no account of another exception; *and whoſoever had ſinned, God would blot out of his book.* Surely had either of theſe been the meaning of *blotting out of God's book*, it would not have been given as the reaſon for Moſes' reſuming his march and carrying up the tribes to the land of promiſe. Common ſenſe revolts at the idea.

BUT if we underſtand *blotting out of God's book* in the ſenſe we have put upon it, we ſee at once the propriety of the order given to Moſes, founded on this act of grace, God's having "repented of the evil which he thought to do unto them." If this is the meaning of the words, the anſwer to Moſes' prayer amounts to this—"I have heard and hearkened to your prayer, and pardoned the ſin of this people, proceed *therefore* in your march, and lead them to the place of which I have ſpoken unto thee." The *therefore go now*, doth not ſurprize us. We ſee the order riſe out of the divine purpoſe; but on any of the other conſtructions of the text, thwarts and contradicts it; or cannot ſurely be aſſigned as the reaſon of it.

SEVERAL other conſiderations illuſtrate the ſubject, and confirm our conſtruction of it.

WHEN Moſes returned to intercede for Iſrael, he certainly aſked of God to pardon their ſin. *Oh! this people have ſinned a great ſin, and have made them gods of gold—Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their ſin*—That he was heard and obtained his requeſt appears not only from the hiſtory contained in our context, but from Moſes' rehearſal of it juſt before his death. He recounted the dealings of God with Iſrael, when taking his leave of them on the plains of Moab—In that valedictory diſcourſe he reminded them of their ſin on this occaſion—of God's anger againſt them—his threatening to deſtroy them, and how he pleaded with God in their behalf, and the ſucceſs which attended his interceſſions for them—"I was afraid of

the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth with you, to destroy you, but *the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also.*"*

SENTENCE of death in the wilderness was afterwards denounced against those sinners, and executed upon them, but not to punish this sin; but the rebellion which was occasioned by the report made by the spies who were sent to search out the land. On that occasion Moses prayed fervently for his people, and not wholly without effect—God had threatened to "smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them," but receded from his threatening through the prevalence of that intercessor in their behalf—"the Lord said I have pardoned according to thy word;" but at the same time, denounced an irrevokable sentence of death in the wilderness against those rebels. Then Moses was not ordered to "lead the people to the place of which God had spoken," but commanded to go back into the wilderness which they had passed—"turn you, and get ye into the wilderness by the way of the red sea."†

AT that time, the exception from the general sentence, was not in favor of Moses and Joshua, who had been on the mount, and taken no part in Israel's sin in making the golden calf, but in favor of Caleb and Joshua, who dissented from the report made by the other spies; though no intimation is given that Caleb was not with the people, and did not sin with them in the matter of the golden calf. There is therefore no doubt res-

* Deuteronomy ix. 19. † Numbers xiv.

pecting the ſin which ſhut that generation out of Canaan. Nor do we apprehend more occaſion for doubt relative to the prayer of Moſes, *to be blotted out of God's book.*

BUT though the ſin of Iſrael on this occaſion was pardoned, and Moſes ordered to lead them to Canaan, ſome temporal chaſtiſements were inflicted, to teach the evil of ſin, and ſerve as a warning to others to keep themſelves in the fear of God; of which Moſes was notified when ordered to advance with the pardoned tribes—"Nevertheleſs, in the day when I viſit, I will viſit their ſin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people becauſe they had made the calf which Aaron made." The manner in which this is mentioned, ſhows that their ſin in that affair was forgiven, and only ſome lighter corrections ordered in conſequence of it; which is common after ſin is pardoned.

REFLEXIONS.

I. WHEN we conſider Moſes pouring out his ſoul before God in behalf of an offending people, it ſhould excite us, as there may be occaſion, to go and do likewiſe.

SOME pretend that prayer offered up for others, muſt be unavailing. God, it is alleged, is immutable, not therefore to be moved to change his meaſures by a creature's cries. And prayer for others can have no tendency, it is ſaid, to operate a change in them, ſo as to bring them into the way of mercy, and render them fit objects of it.

WE would only obſerve in reply, that God hath made it our duty to "pray one for another."* And ſcripture abounds with records of the prevalence of ſuch interceſſions. We have a ſtriking inſtance in our ſubject—Moſes prayed for Iſrael and was heard—"The Lord hearkened unto me at that time alſo." It doth not appear that Iſrael joined with Moſes in his pleadings at the throne of grace on this occaſion. Moſes went up into the mount, leaving Iſrael on the plain below—"I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I ſhall make an atonement for your ſin. And Moſes returned unto the Lord," and pleaded in their behalf. By his individual power, he ſeems to have prevailed. This is only one inſtance out of many which might be adduced from the hiſtory of the ſaints—of this ſaint in particular. Yea, there ſeems to have been ſuch power in the pleadings of this man of God, *while praying for others*, that when God would enter into judgment with them, Moſes muſt be prevailed with to hold his peace, and not pray for them! "The Lord ſpake unto me ſaying, I have ſeen this people, and behold it is a ſtiff necked people. Let me alone that I may deſtroy them—and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they." *Let me alone!* As though God could not deſtroy them without Moſes' conſent!—*And I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they!* As though Moſes muſt be bribed to ſilence, ere judgment could proceed againſt them!

* James v. 16.

THIS repreſentation is not to be received without reſtriction; but we may ſafely infer that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"—that it often draws down bleſſings from above on thoſe who deſerve no good.

THIS ſhould encourage us to wreſtle with God in prayer, for the effuſions of his grace on thoſe who deſerve judgment without mercy, and who might receive it from the righteous ſovereign, did the righteous hold their peace, and "let him alone."

II. WHEN we witneſs this holy many praying *to be blotted out of God's book which he had written*, it ſhould remind us of our ſtate as ſinners whoſe only hope is mercy. "Moſes was faithful in all God's houſe." His attainments in the divine life were ſcarcely equalled; yet muſt have periſhed forever had forgiving grace been denied him. He knew his ſtate; and a view of Iſrael's danger called home his thoughts and led him to implore divine mercy for himſelf, though he ſhould fail to obtain it for an ungrateful people. "Oh! forgive the ſin of this people, but if not, forgive my ſin—pardoning grace is all my dependence—hope would fail ſhould it be denied me."

IF Moſes was thus conſcious of guilt, who can ſay "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?—O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy ſervant; for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified—there is not a juſt man upon earth, who doeth good and ſinneth not." While praying for others, it ill becomes us to forget ourſelves.

ARE we by office appointed to ask mercy for others, and bear them on our hearts before God? We must not therefore conclude that mercy is not necessary for us. Like the high priests of old, "We must offer, first for own sins, and then for the people's." There is only one Intercessor to whom this is needless.

WITNESSING the sin and danger of others, should stir us up to the duty, as it did this leader of Israel. While crying to God for others, we must beware wrapping up ourselves in fancied purity. To this we are tempted by a view of greater sins in others, which serve as a foil to set off our fancied goodness; and especially by the knowledge of certain great sins in others, of which we know ourselves to be clear.

SOME in Moses' situation, would doubtless have adopted that language—"God I thank thee that I am not as other men are—not as this people." Very different was the effect it had on him—it reminded him of his sins, and led him to cry for mercy.

IT is of vast importance that we know ourselves—if we attain this knowledge, from sense of demerit, we shall add to our prayers for others, *but if not, blot me, I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written.*

III. IF we do not mistake the sense of the text, the strange doctrine exploded in the beginning of this discourse, finds no support in it. And surely the doctrine which reason rejects, cannot be supported by revelation. Reason directs us to pursue

that line of conduct which will be moſt for our advantage, taking the whole term of our exiſtence into the account. And revelation doth the ſame—"in keeping God's commandments there is great reward." If we look through the holy ſcriptures we ſhall find abundant rewards annexed to every requirement. The idea that deſpiſing the promiſes, and being willing to renounce the deſire and hope of them, ſhould be made a condition of receiving them, is pitiable weakneſs and abſurdity.

QUITE a different ſpirit is diſplayed in the hiſtory of the ſaints, whom we are directed to follow. All the worthies of old "died in faith not having received the promiſes, but ſeen them afar off."—The renowned leader of Iſrael "had reſpect to the recompenſe of reward"—yea, "the captain of our ſalvation," the divine ſon of Mary, "for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame."*

HERE the way of duty requires ſelf denials. The good man is often called to take up his croſs; but the rewards which follow are conſtantly held up to view, in revelation, as infinitely ſurpaſſing the loſſes and ſufferings of the preſent life. "Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake: Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." Every one who forſaketh worldly advantages, out of regard to God, will "receive an hundred fold reward, and inherit eternal life."

* Hebrews xi. 26. xii. 2.

THIS was made known to the primitive Christians. Therefore their fortitude and zeal to do and suffer in the cause of God—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—I reckon the sufferings of the present time, not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

TOTALLY groundless and unjust, was that charge—"I knew thee that thou art an hard man." We serve a just, a kind, a good master. Even a cup of cold water, given out of love to him, will in no wise go unrewarded—he asks no sacrifice of us for nought. Much less that we should sacrifice ourselves, and be castaways. "Those who honor him, he will honor."

THE slaves of Satan are repaid with misery; but not so the servants of God. "He is not unrighteous to forget our labor of love." These things are revealed for our encouragement and support. Yea, God hath "given us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature—let us therefore be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

SERMON IX.

St. Paul's Wish to be accursed from Christ.

ROMANS ix. 3.

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

FEW characters more remarkable than that of St. Paul, are to be found in hiſtory. He is introduced to our acquaintance on a tragical occaſion—the martyrdom of Stephen, where he appears an accomplice with murderers—" he was ſtanding by and conſenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that ſlew him."

THE circumſtances of Paul's converſion to Chriſtianity were very remarkable, and afford ſtrong evidence of its truth. He was not an ignorant youth, who could be eaſily deluded. He had all the advantages of education which that enlightened age afforded. He was born indeed at Tarſus, a city of Cilicia; but ſent to Jeruſalem for an education, and " brought up at the feet of Gamaliel," a famous Jewiſh Rabbi, who is ſaid to have been many years preſident of the Sanhedrim, and renowned for wiſdom and erudition.

PAUL's mind was not only early imbued with general ſcience, but he was particularly inſtructed in the Jews' religion, and became a zealous member of the phariſaic ſect—verily believed the truth to be with them—thought it to be his duty to inculcate their ſentiments, both ſcriptural and traditionary, and oppoſe all who did not fall in with their views, and help to increaſe their influence, and ſpread their principles. Therefore his hatred of Chriſtianity, and determination to deſtroy it from its foundation—Therefore his implacable averſion to Chriſtians, and unwearied endeavors to ſeduce them from the faith, or compel them to blaſpheme, or where he failed in thoſe attempts, to deſtroy them from the earth.

BUT lo! the triumphs of divine grace! This arch enemy, while purſuing the followers of the Lamb, even to ſtrange cities, is met by the glorified Redeemer, while on his way to Damaſcus, whither he was going, "breathing out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples!" Arreſted in his courſe! Convinced of his madneſs! Brought to believe on that Jeſus whom he had reviled and blaſphemed! And even changed into a preacher of that goſpel which he had been ſo eager to deſtroy!

WE know the ſtrange proceſs by which theſe events were effected—how this proud adverſary was ſubdued and melted into a humble, penitent believer! We know the zeal with which he entered on the goſpel miniſtry—what he did—what he ſuffered, to build up the cauſe he had deſtroy-

ed! How he persevered to the end, and sealed his testimony with his blood!—What a display of divine power and mercy!—These were the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes."

But why marvellous? Why should we wonder when we consider the agent? God is wont to subvert the purposes of his enemies; and often takes their means and instruments which were prepared and intended against him, to accomplish his purposes.

Egypt is told, at a particular period, to have dreaded a deliverer, then expected to arise to Israel—therefore the edict for the destruction of the male children which should be born to the Hebrews, thinking to destroy the deliverer among them. But while that edict was in operation, as though in contempt of infernal malice and Egyptian policy, Moses, the savior of his people, was born. And mark what followed. Lo! The daughter of Pharaoh becomes his mother! The house of Pharaoh his asylum! The learned Might of that hellish empire, his instructors! And all to fit him for the work for which heaven designed him.*

So here, this Moloch of the New Testament—this diffused chieftain among Christians, is educated among Pharisees; the great enemies of Christ—enlisted by their grossest teacher—inspired with a double portion of their zeal and venom against the cause of the Redeemer, and lent forth to destroy. But lo! This mighty Abaddon of diabolical and Jewish malice, is enrolled in the

* [illegible]

courſe—changed into another man, and all his zeal and learning from that hour directed to build up the cauſe of God! The enemy inſtructed and furniſhed, but heaven directed the uſe and application!

GOD'S purpoſes ſtand and will ſtand. None can ſtay his hand, or reverſe his decrees. The means choſen to ſubvert, are uſed to build his cauſe and kingdom. "He taketh the wiſe in their own craftineſs, and the purpoſes of the froward are carried headlong."

WHILE Paul remained a Phariſee he was the idol of his nation; but no ſooner did he become a Chriſtian, than their love was turned to hatred. No other was ſo abhorred as he. Againſt no other did they unite with ſuch determined rancor. Numbers ſoon leagued together, and even "bound themſelves under a curſe not to eat or drink till they had ſlain him." But all their machinations were vain. "Obtaining help from God, of whom he was a choſen veſſel, to bear his name to the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Iſrael," he continued many years, and did, perhaps, more than any other perſon in the cauſe of Chriſt. Jewiſh rancor towards him never abated, but he caught no ſhare of their bitter ſpirit—the temper of Chriſt governed in him—he loved his enemies, and did them good. Like another Moſes he bore Iſrael on his heart before God, and made daily interceſſion for them, weeping at a view of their ſad ſtate, and the evils which he ſaw coming upon them.

SUCH is the ſpirit of the context. "I ſay the truth in Chriſt, I lie not, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that I have great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in my heart.—*For I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh.*

THE depreſſing occaſion of his grief, was the infidelity and obduracy of his nation—that they refuſed to hearken to reaſon and evidence—were reſolved to reject the only Savior; and the evils temporal and eternal, which he foreſaw their temper and conduct would bring upon them—therefore his "great heavineſs and continual ſorrow."

IN the text—*I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh*, the apoſtle hath been thought to imprecate evil on himſelf for the benefit of his people! All the expoſitors we have ſeen on this paſſage, conceive him to have wiſhed ſome ſore calamity to himſelf for the advantage of his nation! Though they have differed reſpecting the magnitude of the evil which he wiſhed to ſuffer for their ſake.

DOCT. DODDRIDGE conſiders him, as "wiſhing to be made a curſe for them, as Chriſt hath been made a curſe for us, that ſo they might be delivered from the guilt which they had brought on themſelves, and be entitled to the bleſſings of the rejected goſpel.

DOCT. S. CLARK views him, as deſirous of ſuffering the calamities to which his people were doomed for rejecting and crucifying the Savior,

ſo that, could they all centre in one perſon, he wiſhed to be the perſon, that he might thereby procure ſalvation for them !"

GROTIUS and POOL underſtand him, as " wiſhing to be ſeparated from the church of Chriſt for the ſake of the Jews !" Which differs little from Doct. Hunter's ſenſe of the paſſage—to which Doct. Guyſe adds, " a deſire of every indignity from man, and to be cut off from communion with Chriſt, for the ſake of Iſrael ;" whom he ſtrangely conſiders as prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity, in conſequence of their prejudices againſt Paul !

BUT why ſhould the apoſtle wiſh evil to himſelf for their ſakes ? What poſſible advantage could his ſufferings have been to his nation ? Is it poſſible that thoſe learned expoſitors ſhould conceive that pains and penalties inflicted on him could have made atonement for their ſins, and expiated their guilt ! They muſt never have read Paul's epiſtles, or never have entered into the ſpirit of them, who could entertain ſuch views as theſe ; or even ſuſpect that aught, ſave the blood of Chriſt, can atone for human guilt. It is ſtrange, therefore, that they could have imagined that he wiſhed to ſuffer with this view. And it is no leſs ſo, that it ſhould be thought that prejudices againſt Paul could have occaſioned Jewiſh prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, when it is ſo evident that their prejudices againſt Paul were wholly occaſioned by his attachment to Chriſtianity—he having been high in their eſteem till he became a Chriſtian.

DAVID once asked to suffer in Israel's stead; but the circumstances of the case were then totally different from those of the case now before us. Israel were suffering *for his sin* in numbering the people; not for any particular sin of their own—"I have sinned and done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me."—But Paul had not sinned, to bring evil on his people—the guilt was all their own.

EXPOSITORS having mistaken Moses' prayer "to be blotted out of God's book," seem generally to have had that prayer in their eye when they have attempted to explain the text; and supposing that Moses prayed to be made a sacrifice for Israel, have thought that Paul had the same spirit, and here followed his example! But that neither of them ever entertained the thought of suffering to expiate the sin of their people, and that the two passages bear no kind of relation to each other, we conceive indubitably certain.

BUT let us consider the text and judge for ourselves of its meaning.

PERHAPS the difficulties which have perplexed it may have chiefly arisen from the translation. The silence of expositors on this head, while puzzled with the passage, is strange, if the difficulty might have been obviated by attending to the original. The translation is plausible solely from this consideration.

MR. POOL is the only expositor we have ever seen, who hath noted the difference between the

tranſlation and the original; and he labors hard to bring them together, but, in our apprehenſion, labors in vain.

THE paſſage literally tranſlated ſtands thus—*For I myſelf boaſted that I was a curſe from Chriſt, above my brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh.**

IF we conſider the context, and the part which had been formerly acted by the apoſtle, it will not be difficult to aſcertain his meaning, nor ſtrange that he ſhould expreſs himſelf as in the text. He begins the chapter with ſtrong expreſſions of concern for his nation, who had rejected him "whoſe name alone is given under heaven," for the ſalva-

* Ηυχομην γαρ αυλος εγω αναθεμα εἰναι απο Του Χρἰσου υπερ των αδελφων μου συγενων μου κατα σαρκα.

Ηυχομην, rendered in the tranſlation by, *I could wiſh*, forms in the imperfect of the indicative mood, in the Attic dialect. Mr. Pool was too accurate a ſcholar not to obſerve the diſagreement of the tranſlation with the original. "Some read it as in the indicative; but it is generally conſidered as in the optative, and altered by a figure which takes an *iota* from the middle, and cuts off an *αν* from the end of the word forming Ηυχομην, inſtead of ευχοἰμην αν." †

BUT what warrant have we for theſe alterations? They only ſerve to darken a difficult text.

THE moſt natural and common conſtruction of ευχομαἰ, from which ηυχομην derives, is, *to glory, or boaſt. Gloriar* is the firſt word uſed to expreſs the meaning of it in Schrevelius' Lexicon; and the meaning ευχος, the theme of this verb juſtifies the conſtruction, in preference to that uſed by the tranſlators. And the Greek prepoſition υπερ, which is rendered *for*, is often uſed to ſignify *above*, or *more than*.

FOR the juſtice of the above criticiſms we appeal to the learned. If they are juſt, our ſenſe of the text will be admitted.

† Vid. Pool in loc.

tion of men. If they continued to neglect the grace offered them in the gospel, he knew that they could not escape. And when he looked on them and mourned over them, the dangers which a few years before had hung over himself, rose up before him. He had been an unbeliever, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the church of Christ; had boasted his enmity to Christ and opposition to the gospel; in which he had even exceeded the body of his nation—he had taken the lead against Christianity—been unrivalled in zeal against the cause, and rancour against the followers of the Lamb. When warned of his danger, and admonished to consider what would be his portion, should Jesus prove to be the Messias, he seems to have derided the friendly warnings, and imprecated on himself the vengeance of the Nazerene!—to have defied him to do his worst! to pour his curse upon him!

IT is not strange that witnessing the temper of his nation, should call these things to his remembrance—that the consideration should affect him—that he should shudder at the prospect of the destruction which hung over them, and at the recollection of that from which himself had been "scarcely saved"—that he should exclaim, "God and my conscience witness my great heaviness and continual sorrow, when I look on my brethren the Jews, and consider the ruin coming upon them, from which I have been saved, "so as by fire!" Lately I was even more the enemy of Christ than they, and boasted greater enmity a-

gainſt him! And ſhould have brought on myſelf a more intolerable doom, had not a miracle of power and mercy arreſted me in my courſe!" That ſuch conſiderations and a recollection of the ſhare which he had formerly taken in ſtrengthening the prejudices of his nation againſt the truth, ſhould deeply affect him, and draw ſuch expreſſion from him as we find in the text and context, is not ſtrange. They appear natural for a perſon circumſtanced as he was at that time; and eſpecially to one divinely forewarned of the devaſtations then coming on his place and nation.

THESE we conceive to be the feelings and views expreſſed by the apoſtle in the beginning of this chapter—but that he ſhould wiſh to be put into the place of Chriſt; or madly wiſh evil to himſelf, from which nobody could be benefited, cannot be ſuſpected; unleſs with Feſtus, we ſuppoſe him to have been "beſide himſelf," and not to have known what he wrote, when he expreſſed himſelf as in the text.

REFLEXIONS.

I. IN Paul's converſion how wonderfully apparent are the wiſdom and power of God? When we view Saul of Tarſus making havoc of the church in Judea, and ſoliciting permiſſion to purſue its ſcattered members even into exile, we conſider him as a determined enemy of Chriſt. Who then would ſuſpect that he ſhould be made to feel the power of divine grace? That he would become a Chriſtian? Yea, a prime miniſter of Immanuel! But lo! For this cauſe did God raiſe

him up! For this work was he training while drinking at the fount of Science, and learning the Jews' religion in the school of Gamaliel! While unsanctified he was a destroyer; but when melted by divine influence into the temper of the gospel, all his powers and all his acquisitions were consecrated to the service of God and the Redeemer.

To affect this change in Paul, however unexpected, was not beyond the power of God; and it was done of God! Neither was it delayed till Paul had spent his best days in the service of Satan. At setting out to destroy, he was met of the ascended Savior, transformed by the renewing of his mind, and from that time devoted to the service of God; and continued faithful unto death. Many were his trials—severe his sufferings for the gospel which he preached; but "none of these things moved him; neither did he count his life dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

II. THE temper manifested by St. Paul when contemplating the state of his nation, how worthy of imitation? Like his divine Lord, "when he beheld them he wept over them." Neither was the view unprofitable. It served to remind him of his own past guilt and danger, and the mercy which had been exercised toward him. His guilt and danger had been great. In high handed opposition to heaven, he had even exceeded "his kinsmen according to the flesh." Witnessing their

ſtate brought theſe again to his remembrance, and the grace of God which had ſtopt him in his courſe, and ſaved him from deſtruction, cauſing him at once, to rejoice and tremble!

MANY of the children of God when they witneſs the ſecurity of ſinners; how they neglect the great ſalvation, and harden themſelves in ſin, may remember when they did the ſame themſelves; and ſome of them, in a higher degree than moſt of thoſe who appear to be walking the downward road.

THOSE who have found mercy cannot refrain from mourning over thoſe whom they ſee hardening themſelves in ſin; nor ſhould they ceaſe to warn them from their way, and to cry to God in their behalf. But their attention is not wholly taken up from home; it often reverts thither, and ſtirs them up to grateful acknowledgments of divine goodneſs to themſelves.

WHO is he that maketh me to differ from the thoughtleſs ſinner? is a conſideration which often riſes in the good man's mind, while looking on the careleſs and ſecure. It is a proper and a profitable conſideration—tends to keep him humble and mindful of his dependence.

SENSE of paſt dangers ſerve to enhance the value of preſent ſafety. The greater dangers we have eſcaped, and the more wonderful our deliverances have been, the greater ſhould be our love to our deliverer, and the greater our care to make him ſuitable returns. If we entertain juſt views of theſe things, ſuch will be the effect. Thoſe to whom moſt is forgiven love the moſt.

BY reflecting on the riches of divine mercy, we ſhould ſtir up our ſouls to love the Lord. If witneſſing the unconcern of others, while in the broad road, ſerves to excite us to gratitude for divine goodneſs ſhown to us, "the wrath of man is thereby made to praiſe the Lord." Such was the effect which a view of Iſrael's hardneſs had on Paul--May all Chriſt's diſciples cultivate the ſame temper.

III. IN Paul's converſion we ſee God diſtinguiſhing among his enemies, and calling one into his kingdom who was, from principle, a deſtroyer of his ſaints. Paul was a Phariſee and the ſon of a Phariſee. No ſect among the Jews was more bitter againſt Chriſt—no other ſo eager and active in their endeavors to cruſh his cauſe and ſubvert his kingdom. Yet numbers of that ſect obtained mercy. The ſame did not happen reſpecting the Saducees. No inſtance of a Saducee brought to repentance, can be adduced. Why this diſcrimination?

THERE may be reaſons not revealed; but ſome are diſcernible.

THE Phariſees "had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge." Saul, the Phariſee, "verily thought, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus"—he did not ſin againſt the light of his own mind. The ſame was doubtleſs the caſe with many others of that ſect. The Saducees were devoid of principle—had rejected firſt principles—thoſe taught by the light of nature. While firſt principles are retained, ſuch as the belief of a divine exiſtence—a difference

between good and evil—a future ſtate, in which men will receive the deeds done in the body, and the like, there remains a foundation on which religion may reſt; but where theſe are rejected, the foundation is deſtroyed. Of the former who have erred in leſſer matters of faith, and been thereby ſeduced into practical errors, many have been reclaimed, and brought to repentance: Not ſo the latter. "One among a thouſand have we not found." And thoſe whoſe ſentiments border on atheiſm, or infidelity, are ſeldom called of God.

THERE is a certain point of error in opinion, from which a return is rare. Thoſe who reach it are commonly given up to ſtrong deluſions, which lead to deſtruction.

AND practical errors, eſpecially thoſe which are oppoſed to conviction, are highly criminal, and exceedingly dangerous—they ſear the conſcience, and provoke God to leave ſinners to themſelves—"My ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man—the times of ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men every where to repent."

SAUL of Tarſus ſpeaks of himſelf as a chief of ſinners "becauſe he perſecuted the church of God;" yet he obtained mercy! But thoſe who ſin againſt the light of their own minds, can draw little encouragement from thence. He hath declared the reaſon of the diſtinguiſhing mercy ſhown to him—"becauſe I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* No ſooner was he convinced of his miſtake, than he returned, with, "Lord what wilt thou have

* 1 Timothy i. 13.

me to do?"—So do not those "who know their master's will and do it not."

WOULD we share the blessedness of believing Saul, we must imitate his repentance; so shall we find mercy with God. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him."*

* Romans x. 12.

SERMON X.

David's Sin in the Matter of Uriah.

2 Samuel xii. 13.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

THE ſin here referred to is that of David in the matter of Uriah. A ſtrange and ſad event—taken in all its circumſtances and connections, it is without a parallel. But the circumſtance moſt to be lamented, is that mentioned by the prophet, in the cloſe of his meſſage—"By this deed thou haſt given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme."

The juſtneſs of this remark, doubtleſs appeared at that day, in the triumph of ſinners and exultations of ſcoffers; and the ſtory brought down to us, "on whom the ends of the world are come," is ſtill abuſed to keep vice in countenance.

"Look to David, your man of religion! Your man after God's own heart!" and witneſs his complicated crimes! and his long continued ſecurity and unconcern under guilt, which cannot be

charged on us, who view religion as a dream!"—So the infidel.

WHILE people of another deſcription, wound God's cauſe yet more deeply, by the argument which they draw from this fall of David; namely, thoſe who are allowedly vicious, yet call themſelves "of the houſehold of faith—who are pure in their own eyes, though not cleanſed from their filthineſs." Theſe, when reproved, eſpecially if their piety is called in queſtion, often recur to David for ſupport—tell us, that "though eminent for piety, he was guilty of greater ſins than their's, and long continued in them—that he remained impenitent till viſited by Nathan, after the birth of his child by Bathſheba. If, ſay they, he could continue ſo long ſecure and unconcerned, why not longer? And why may not others fall into ſins and continue in them for months and years after having received the grace of God, and after they are numbered among the ſaints?"

THIS, we conceive, to be the moſt baleful concluſion which is drawn from this hiſtory. And could it be made to appear that ſuch was David's ſtate, for ſo long a term, we ſee no way to avoid the concluſion—ſee not but the idea which the ſcriptures give of religion as a holy principle, productive of a holy life, muſt be relinquiſhed.

SUCH is the idea which the ſcriptures do give of religion—they teach, that it changeth the heart, and forms the new creature—that "in this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil; that whoſoever doeth not righteouſneſs is not of God; that by their fruits we are to know men."

THUS ſpeaks that holy book which we believe to be from God, and to ſhew us the way of ſalvation. But if the children of God are not made to differ from others, if they may live in allowed diſregard of the law of God, like others, theſe diſtinctions are idle and unworthy our regard. This matter demands our attention.

FROM the ſubject before us, the errors now mentioned draw their chief ſupport.

WE do not flatter ourſelves that we can ſtop mouths of ſcoffers, or ſo clearly elucidate this dark part of the book of God, that it ſhall no more be abuſed to the purpoſes of depravity; but believe that it may be made apparent that it hath been miſtaken and perverted; and thereby rendered the more miſchievous. This will now be attempted.

THAT David remained unconcerned and devoid of repentance for the ſins which he committed in the matter of Uriah, till awakened to conſideration by the miniſtry of Nathan, ſeems to have been taken for granted, and to have been the ground of theſe abuſes. This may have been the common opinion. Whether it is founded in reality, we will now inquire.

OF thoſe who argue from a ſuppoſition that this was the caſe, we aſk evidence that it was ſo. That we have no expreſs declaration that Nathan found him a penitent, we conceive to be all that can be alleged as evidence that he remained till that time impenitent. To which may be rejoined, that we have no expreſs declaration that Nathan

found him impenitent. The fact is, both ſcripture and profane hiſtory are ſilent reſpecting the ſtate of David's mind from the commiſſion of the ſins, till he was viſited by the prophet. We are left therefore to judge of the matter on other grounds. And on what grounds can we form a more probable opinion than by conſidering *the general character of the man—the nature and effects of renewing grace—and the temper and conduct of the delinquent when he was reproved by the prophet?* From a conſideration of theſe we may derive the moſt probable ſolution of the queſtion, or judge what was probably the ſtate in which David was found by Nathan.

IT may be proper to premiſe,

I. THAT good men, while in this ſtate of imperfection, ſhould be ſurprized by temptation into ſins, and even great and heineous ſins, is neither new nor ſtrange. Many inſtances occur in the hiſtory of the ſaints recorded in the ſcriptures. "Aaron, the ſaint of the Lord," and Moſes, whoſe general character was that of "a ſervant, faithful in all God's houſe," were both ſeduced into ſins of ſuch enormity that they were excluded the land of promiſe, in common with rebellious Iſrael. Among New Teſtament ſaints ſimilar lapſes are obſervable. Even the apoſtles forſook the Savior, and fled when Judas led forth the hoſtile band to apprehend him; and Peter, when under the influence of fear, with oaths and imprecations "denied the Lord that bought him!"

THE habitual temper of theſe good men could not be argued from theſe ſudden acts. Neither is

judgment to be formed of others, except by obſerving the general tenor of their lives. Strong and unexpected temptations may, and often do, ſeduce the beſt of thoſe who remain in the body and retain the weakneſſes of fallen creatures yet on trial.

II. THERE is ſomething in each one's conſtitution which prediſpoſes to certain ſins. To every perſon there is a "ſin which moſt eaſily beſets him"—from which he is liable to ſtronger temptation than from other ſins—and temptation to ſuch ſins, may riſe from concurring circumſtances, above its natural ſtate, and become almoſt invincible. Nor will any perſon who reads the hiſtory of David doubt to what particular ſin he was naturally moſt diſpoſed. Neither are we inſenſible how one ſin prepares the way for another, and ſtrengthens temptation to it.

DAVID'S ſins on the occaſion before us were complicated and exceeding ſinful. But we know how he was ſeduced to the firſt, and how the others followed of courſe.

RESPECTING the ſtate in which he was found by Nathan we may judge,

I. FROM his general character. This is ſo well known, that the bare mention is almoſt ſufficient. The ſcriptures teach us that he was pious from his youth. When Samuel was ſent to anoint him, ſufficient intimation was given that his heart was right with God. When Eliab, the firſt born of Jeſſe paſſed before the prophet, pleaſed with his appearance, he ſuppoſed him to be the man whom God had choſen to rule his people—"Surely the

Lord's anointed is before him"--but God refuſed him with this declaration, "The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." David's after life juſtified the preference then given him.

No perſon acquainted with his hiſtory as contained in the ſacred records, will ſcruple his general devotedneſs to the ſervice of God. Should doubt ariſe, we may refer to the character given of him by the pen of inſpiration, about half a century after his death. "David did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, and turned not aſide from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, ſave only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." *

IN that matter he greatly erred. There is no need however to conſider him as then fallen from grace. The remains of depravity which continue after renovation, are ſufficient under exiſting circumſtances, to account for his fall on that occaſion. But it is inconcievable that a perſon of eſtabliſhed piety ſhould remain for a whole year ſtupid and unconcerned under the guilt of ſuch tranſgreſſions; and the utter improbability of ſuch an event will be further apparent, if we attend,

II. To the nature and effects of renewing grace. It is no leſs true of holy than of unholy principles, that they are operative. The governing principle, whatever it may be, will bring forth fruit according to its nature.

* 1 Kings xv. 5.

A GOOD man may be ſurprized into ſin, as we have ſeen, but he will not go deliberately into the way of it, like the wicked. Neither do the two characters, when they have been ſeduced into ſin, reflect upon it with ſimilar feelings and views. When the good think on their ways, they are grieved and humbled for their faults, and turn their feet to God's teſtimonies; but the wicked bleſs themſelves in their hearts, as fortunate in the accompliſhment of their vicious deſires. The good maintain a ſenſe of God's preſence—"Thou God ſeeſt me." The wicked forget God, or doubt his attention to their temper and conduct—"How doth God know? Is there knowledge in the moſt high?"

IT is not ſtrange if thoſe whoſe only joys are the pleaſures of ſenſe, felicitate themſelves when they attain them; but thoſe who love and fear the Lord, and prefer his favor above all earthly joys, muſt have other views. If ſenſible that they have offended God, and incurred his diſpleaſure, it greives them at their hearts, and fills them with deep concern.

APART from all conſiderations of intereſt, the good ſee a baſeneſs and deformity in ſin, which render it the object of their averſion. They conſider it the diſgrace of their rational nature, and are humbled and abaſed when conſcious that temptation hath prevailed to ſeduce them from the paths of rectitude.

IT will not be imagined that David could baniſh thought, and drive away reflection, for a whole

year after the commiſſion of ſuch enormous ſins as he committed in the matter now before us.

IT is preſumed that no man, retaining reaſon, was ever able ſoon to forget any enormity, of which he knew himſelf guilty. The remembrance always haunts the imagination, and conſcience goads the mind with a thouſand ſtings. The delinquent hath not power to prevent it. He cannot drive away thought, and turn off his attention to other objects.

IT is further preſumed, that every good man is formed to the habit of reflection; that he often enters into himſelf by a ſerious attention to his his ſtate; conſiders his temper; reviews his conduct, and brings both to the divine ſtandard, that he may know himſelf, and reform whatever is amiſs.

A PERSON of David's character, eſpecially circumſtanced as he was at that time, could not poſſibly have been deſtitute of conſideration. The ſociety of the woman who had been the occaſion of the crimes which had ſo maimed his character, muſt have brought thoſe crimes to his remembrance, and kept them on his mind. Every time ſhe came into his preſence, or cheered him by her ſmiles, a group of affecting thoughts muſt have ruſhed in upon him; his firſt offence, an offence which the law of his God would have obliged him to puniſh with death, in a ſubject, and his after, and ſtill more enormous ſins, which he had committed to hide the firſt, and poſſeſs the object which he was forbidden even to covet, would occur to his

mind. From the lovely object in his presence, his mind would naturally revert to her late, first greatly injured, and then murdered husband; to his faithfulness and zeal for the honor of his king and country, which had torn him from the embraces of a lovely partner, and the society of a family, dear to him, and would not even suffer him to visit them when liberty was given him of his prince; to his careful attention to deliver the letters, by which he had unsuspectingly borne the mandate for his own murder; to his heroism when ordered up to the walls of the besieged city, though not supported by the commander in chief; and his noble exertions to subdue the enemies of Israel, amidst which he had bravely fallen! Such reflections must have filled his mind; nor was it possible that he should have driven them away.

NEITHER could he do other than condemn the part which he had acted, and feel pain when he considered it. Surely such considerations must have racked his guilty soul, and made him tremble and mourn in bitterness of his spirit before God.

A GRACELESS tyrant who neither fears God, nor regards man, may view his subjects as made for him, and think himself entitled to deprive them, at his pleasure, of every comfort, and even life. This hath been the avowed sentiment of many an eastern despot. But it is not supposeable of a good man—"the man after God's own heart," though now seduced into certain heinous sins. Surely he could not think on his ways—on his then late transgressions, but remorse must have harrowed up

his ſoul! He muſt have been deeply affected, and led to cry, "God be merciful to me a ſinner!"

THE feelings of a good man, who had been ſeduced into ſin, and reflected upon it with deep contrition, are pathetically deſcribed by the pen of this ſame perſon, in the thirty ſecond pſalm; and the deſcription is couched in the firſt perſon, as what himſelf had experienced. "When I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old by reaſon of my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy on me; my moiſture is turned into the drought of ſummer." There is a ſtrong probability that his feelings on this occaſion, before he confeſſed his ſin, and obtained a ſenſe of pardon, are here expreſſed. They are the ſame which we ſhould ſuppoſe he muſt feel while tormented with a ſenſe of ſuch enormous guilt.

III. WE are to conſider his temper and conduct when reproved by the prophet.

THESE are the ſame which we ſhould expect, did we know him to have been then a penitent. He was indeed taken by guile, and made to condemn himſelf before he perceived that he was the guilty perſon of whom the prophet complained. But had he till that time continued impenitent, it is not probable that he would have been inſtantly humbled, and immediately confeſſed his ſin with true contrition. It is much more probable that he would have reſented the application to himſelf, as an affront offered to royalty, and avenged himſelf on the Lord's meſſenger.

GOD hath power inſtantly to change the ſinner's heart without previous awakenings; but this is not the method of grace. Convictions, ordinarily, if not invariably, antecede converſion, prepare for it, and lead to it.

NEITHER is this the method of grace, only with the ſinner at the firſt great change, termed the new birth, but with the ſaint who falls into heinous ſins, and thereby reſembles the ſinner. When a good man yields to temptation and falls from his ſtedfaſtneſs, God commonly hides his face from him—for a term, and often for a conſiderable term, he ſits in darkneſs—is ready to give up his hope—to conclude that he hath believed in vain—never loved God or hated ſin—never paſſed from death unto life. In fine, he feels ſimilar pains, and paſſeth in many reſpects, a ſimilar change, when renewed again by repentance, as when firſt made a new creature.

Do we ever ſee perſons who have been ſeduced into great and heinous ſins, brought back to God, and comforted with his preſence without ſenſations of this kind? We preſume the inſtance cannot be adduced. We ſhould look with a jealous eye on one who pretended to be an example of it. From the methods of grace at preſent, we may judge of them in times paſt. God is the ſame—ſin equally his averſion, and ſinners alike the objects of his diſpleaſure.

THE ſuppoſition that a perſon is one moment a hardened ſinner; the next a thorough penitent, pardoned, reſtored and comforted of God, is ſo

diverſe from his common manner of treating great offenders, that it ſhould not be admitted in a given caſe, without clear and ſtrong evidence; and in the caſe before us there is no evidence; even circumſtances have a different aſpect.

No ſooner was this offender reproved, than he diſcovered a humble penitent diſpoſition. He freely confeſſed his ſin, both to God and man, as one who had thought on his ways and repented of his tranſgreſſions; which could not have been expected of one who after the commiſſion of ſuch crimes, remained thoughtleſs and ſecure, till the moment when his guilt and danger were ſet before him.

BUT if David was a penitent before he was viſited by Nathan, why had he concealed his repentance? Why ſpread a veil over it and neglected to glorify God by a confeſſion of his ſins? Did he think it ſufficient to confeſs to God, and humble himſelf in ſecret?

So ſome argue, and endeavor to cover the ſins of which the world knows them to be guilty. But we are far from ſuſpecting this of David.

To break the divine law is implicitly to condemn it. "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" To conceal ſorrow for ſin, is in effect to juſtify it. Then only is God glorified by an offender, when he takes the blame and the ſhame of his ſins on himſelf, acknowledging the law which he hath broken to be "holy, juſt and good." Of theſe things, this offender could not be inſenſible.

DAVID was indeed under ſtrong temptation to hide his ſins. He was the head of a family, ſeveral members of which were abandoned characters. Theſe he had doubtleſs often reproved. He was the head of a nation, numbers of which were children of Belial. Theſe he had called to repentance, reproved, puniſhed. He had long profeſſed religion —perhaps often declared its power to change the heart and mend the life. But if his crimes were now made public, he muſt appear a "ſinner above all who dwelt at Jeruſalem!" To have his conduct known would cover him with ſhame, and "give great occaſion to the enemy to blaſpheme, and ſpeak reproachfully."

DID theſe conſiderations prevent him from confeſſing his ſins, and induce him to cover his tranſgreſſions? They were moſtly arguments for his proclaiming his repentance, had his ſins been public.

BY his ſins he had countenanced wickedneſs, and ſet the example of it in a dignified ſtation. By his confeſſion he would condemn it, and juſtify the law of God, which forbids it; and by his return to duty, do every thing then in his power, to repair the injury he had done and prevent or remove the bad effects of his example. Why then had he neglected it?

THERE was only one conſideration which could excuſe him—that, we apprehend, juſtified him. His ſins in this affair were not public. It appears from ſeveral circumſtances that they were kept out of ſight till the prophet was ſent to reprove and publiſh them, and his repentance of them.

JOAB knew indeed that the king wished the death of Uriah. It is not certain that he knew the cause. If he did, it is not probable that he had divulged it.

THAT these matters were not transacted openly, or generally known, may be inferred from two considerations, namely, from Bathsheba's going into mourning for Uriah, and from Nathan's declaration, when he foretold the evils which would come on David and his family, to punish his sins on this occasion, notwithstanding his repentance. Mournings were very short among the Hebrews; but this adultress would not have put on mourning, or David delayed to take her to his house, to be his wife, till her mourning was ended, had this affair been public. But, that it was not so, is put out of doubt by the language of the prophet in his address to the king—"Thou didst it secretly."

IF the matter was not public, the delinquent was not to be criminated because he did not make it so. Sins committed in secret are to be confessed and mourned only before him who sees in secret. Such seems to have been David's situation from the time of his fall, till the publication of his guilt, by the prophet; during which term he felt all the horrors of conscious guilt; "God's hand lying heavy on him."

As it pleased God that both his fall and recovery should be made public, the prophet seems to have delivered his message before witnesses. This took away the ground of temptation longer to hide his sins, and cleared the way to a public renuncia-

tion, and return to duty. And the fallen prince waited no exhortations—needed no entreaties—"I acknowledged my sin unto thee; and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." *

THUS the opinion of those who suppose that David remained impenitent and secure, till awakened to consideration by the ministry of Nathan, is devoid of proof, and even of probability. David's well known character—the nature of renewing grace; and the temper and conduct of this transgressor, when reproved by the prophet, concur to prove him then already a penitent; which is confirmed by the consolations forthwith administered to him by the Lord's messenger.

IF in this instance God pardoned, and gave a sense of pardon, to so heinous an offender, without a moment intervening sense of guilt, and evidence of pardon and peace, it must have been a very singular divine treatment of so vile a sinner!

AND if David, after having been long eminent for piety, lived a year of stupid unconcern, under such enormous guilt, it must have been a very strange event! A phenomenon in the history of man, unequalled in the annals of the world! Whether there is evidence to justify so strange a conclusion, judge ye.

IF we have not mistaken our subject, this affair gives no countenance to those who pretend religion to be a thing of nought—that it doth not change

* Psalm xxxii. 5.

the heart and life, turning men from sin to holiness. Good people may be seduced into sin, but they are soon renewed by repentance—soon turn again to the Lord in the way of duty, confessing their sins and renewing their purposes and engagements to serve the Lord—"That which I know not teach thou me; and wherein I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

NEITHER doth this affair yield comfort and hope to those, who while they call themselves saints, live like sinners. If *here* they find no comfort and support, Where will they find it? The only example thought to have been found in "the footsteps of the flock," fails them; and we are left to conclude that sanctification is the principal evidence of justification—"that by their fruits we are to know men."

IT is a dark omen when professors paliate their errors and deviations from duty, by pleading those of saints of old. Those saints erred; but they did not long continue in sin—"When they thought on their ways they turned by repentance." Neither did they flatter themselves in allowed wickedness.

IF any allege the sins of former saints in excuse for their own, they allege not that which distinguished them as saints, but that which they retained as sinners—not that which they possessed of the image of God, but that which remained to them of the image of Satan. This they may have in full, and yet be of their father the Devil. And such is

the ſad ſtate of thoſe who allowedly ſerve ſin, under whatever pretence.

THOSE who are born of God, favor the things which are of God. Sin is odious in their view. They long for freedom from it—"Oh wretched man that I am! Who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?"

THE ſaints wiſh for heaven, not only that they may ſee "their father who is in heaven," and the divine Redeemer, "who loved them and gave himſelf for them;" but becauſe there "the ſpirits of the juſt are made perfect"—becauſe there they expect to be holy as God is holy—becauſe there, to be "ſatisfied with God's likeneſs, and rejoice always before him." May God give us this temper, and keep us to his kingdom, for his mercy's ſake in Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON XI.

General Character of Christians.

GALATIANS v. 24.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts.

ST. PAUL is supposed to have been the first herald of gospel grace to the Galatians; and they appear to have rejoiced at the glad tidings, and to have received the bearer with much respect. But after his departure, certain judaizing teachers went among them, and labored but too successfully, to alienate their affections from him, and turn them from the simplicity of the gospel.

THE malice and errors of those deceitful workers, and the mischief which they occasioned at Galatia, caused the writing of this epistle; which, like the other writings of this apostle, reflects light on the gospel in general, while it served to correct the mistakes of those professors of Christianity, and guide their erring footsteps into the way of peace and truth.

IT is not our deſign to enter into the controverſy between this inſpired teacher, and his enemies. We are only concerned to underſtand him, and ſhall receive his inſtructions as communicated from above.

THE primary deſign of this epiſtle was to refute thoſe falſe teachers who urged circumciſion, and the obſervance of ſundry parts of the Levitical code, which had been abrogated by the goſpel. This appears to have been a leading error of thoſe anarchiſts. That the apoſtle did not lay the intolerable burthens of the Moſaic ritual, on the profeſſors of Chriſtianity, was made the ground of a charge againſt him. St. Paul defended himſelf by evincing the errors of his opponents, ſhewing that Chriſtians are made free from the ceremonial law; and that their juſtification before God is not in virtue of any obedience of their own, to either the ceremonial, or the moral law, but of grace through faith in Chriſt.

IN the former part of the epiſtle, he ſhows the impoſſibility of juſtification in any other than the goſpel way—eſpecially in that way, to which thoſe falſe teachers directed—ſhews that they ſubverted the goſpel, and rendered Chriſt's ſufferings of no effect—"By the works of the law, ſhall no fleſh be juſtified—If righteouſneſs come by the law, then Chriſt is dead in vain."*

WE conceive theſe to be obvious truths, and wonder that they ſhould be matter of doubt, or diſpute, among thoſe who are favored with reve-

* Chapter ii. 16, 21.

lation, and receive it as given of God. Perfect obedience is evidently the demand of the divine law, and condemnation is denounced againſt the breakers of it. "This do, and thou ſhalt live, but the ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die.* But none of our race keep the law. "There is not a juſt man upon earth, that doeth good and ſinneth not." The ſcripture hath concluded all under ſin, that the promiſe "by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, might be given to them that believe." Mankind are "ſhut up to the faith in Chriſt." This is the way in which God "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. He that believeth ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned." Therefore the hope of the apoſtle, in the way of faith, while diſcarding hope in any other way. "Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt; even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law."

FROM the reaſoning of the apoſtle, the falſe teachers at Galatia ſeem not to have urged obedience to the whole law. Circumciſion they taught to be indiſpenſible. St. Paul aſſures them, that if they were under obligation to receive circumciſion, they were equally obliged to keep the whole law; and that they bound themſelves to this by ſubmitting to be circumciſed—that if they reverted to the law, and placed their dependence on their obedience to it, they renounced the grace of Chriſt, and would not be benefited by it. "Be-

* Lev. xviii. 5.—Ezek. xviii. 4.

hold, I Paul, ſay unto you, that if ye be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing. For I teſtify again to every man that is circumciſed, that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. Chriſt is become of none effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the law, ye are fallen from grace."

WHILE ſuch was the ſtate of thoſe who followed the judaizing teachers, thoſe who retained the goſpel as taught by the apoſtle, had another hope —a hope which would not make aſhamed—a hope in divine grace through faith in Chriſt—"We through the ſpirit wait for the hope of righteouſneſs by faith. For in Jeſus Chriſt neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but faith which worketh by love."

SUCH is every Chriſtian's hope before God. He "counts all things to be loſs and dung that he may win Chriſt; and be found in him, not having on his own righteouſneſs which is of the law; but the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith."

BUT while St. Paul was exhibiting and urging theſe important truths, on the wavering Galatians, he foreſaw, that it would be objected, that the ſcheme which he advanced, tended to licentiouſneſs—that if men might be ſaved by faith without the works of the law, they might indulge themſelves in ſin—that this would render Chriſt the miniſter of ſin. The ſame objection appears to have been made at Rome, where a faction exiſted ſimilar to this at Galatia. This conſequence the apoſtle rejected with abhorrence. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea we eſtabliſh the law."

THE Levitical code included both the ceremonial and the moral law. Though St. Paul declared justification unattainable by obedience to either or to both, he did not set aside the moral law, as no longer obligatory, as he did the ceremonial. This latter had answered the ends of its appointment, and was abolished by fulfilment. It was only a shadow of good things to come, and fled away before that of which it was a shadow. Christ had therefore blotted it out and taken it away. But the moral law was not done away. Christ hath fulfilled it for those who believe on him; but it doth not therefore cease to be obligatory upon them. It is of universal and eternal obligation. The salvation of mankind, doth not, however, depend on their obedience to it. If it did, they could not be saved, because all mankind have broken it. "Salvation is of grace, through faith."

INSTEAD of setting Christians free from obligation to keep the moral law, what Christ hath done for them strengthens their obligations to obey it. An increase of mercies is an increase of obligations to serve the Lord.

BUT yet more is done to secure obedience from those who are Christ's—yea enough to secure it. A change passeth on them, when they become his, which reconciles them to the law, and causes them to delight in it, and in the duties which it enjoins. This produces a pleasing conformity to it—"his commandments are not grievous." Their obedience is sincere and universal. Others may render

a partial obedience, out of fear, but the obedience of the renewed flows from love, and hath reſpect to all God's commandments.

REMAINS of depravity abide in the Chriſtian, but they do not habitually govern in him. That they are not wholly purged out of his nature, is to him the occaſion of grief—cauſes him to go ſorrowing: But he doth not gain complete deliverance till he puts off the body. He puts on, however, the goſpel armor, and maintains a warfare againſt his own corruptions within, no leſs than againſt the powers of darkneſs without. Though ſometimes wounded, and made to go on his way halting, he is, in his general courſe victorious, riſing ſuperior to oppoſition, and living unto God. "Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin; for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God"—cannot ſin, like others, allowedly and habitually. "How ſhall he who is dead to ſin, live any longer therein?"

SUCH is the character of the Chriſtian, as drawn in the bible; ſo that all ground of objection to the goſpel ſcheme, as drawn by St. Paul, is removed. Thoſe who are Chriſt's inſtead of taking liberty to ſin, becauſe "they are not under the law, but under grace," are of all men moſt careful to do God's commandments; and from the nobleſt principles. Their obedience is not ſervile, but filial.

THIS is the ſpirit of the text. *They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts*—HAVE *crucified*. The change which frees

from the governing power of indwelling corruption, and diſpoſeth to walk in newneſs of life, hath already paſſed upon them. None are Chriſt's till this change takes place in them.

BUT while the apoſtle vindicates the doctrine of grace, and ſhews its beneficial influence on the morals of men, care is taken to guard againſt miſtakes on the other hand—not to give occaſion to conſider renewing grace as wholly eradicating the principles of depravity, and putting an end, at once to the ſpiritual conteſt. This ſubject is treated more largely in the epiſtle to the Romans.* But the oppoſition of natural and gracious principles, is here mentioned, and ſome of its effects deſcribed. "The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh; and theſe are contrary the one to the other; ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

IN every man, whatever may be his character, there are different principles, which ſtruggle and contend with one another. The natural man feels a bias to wickedneſs, and wiſhes to indulge his depraved inclinations. But reaſon forbids, and conſcience remonſtrates, and warns him to beware what he doth—reminds him that to yield to paſſion is wrong—to indulge appetite unreaſonably is ſinful—that for theſe things God will bring him into judgment. Thus the principles implanted in the mind, by the God of nature, withſtand the ſinner in his way, and reſiſt him in his courſe; they hold him back and reſtrain him from gratify-

* Chapter vii.

ing his natural deſires—from doing that to which he is inclined, and hath power to do. By this means he is prevented from giving full latitude to his corruptions; yea, he is ſometimes influenced to do good. Herod was a vile character; but "he feared John, knowing that he was a juſt man, and an holy, and obſerved him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly."* Many ſimilar inſtances might be adduced. There is not a ſinner who doth not feel the natural bias, and the power of reaſon and conſcience, ſtriving and contending within him; and ſometimes the one prevails to influence his conduct, and ſometimes the other.

NEITHER is the Chriſtian free from ſimilar ſtruggles. Reaſon and conſcience have naturally the ſame power in him which they have in others. The corrupt bias, is alſo weakened in renovation; yea receives a deadly wound. But it is not immediately deſtroyed. Still its influence is felt, and its effects obſerved. Sometimes it evinceth ſo much power, that its deadly wound ſeems to be healed. Reaſon and conſcience, ſtrengthened by renewing grace, ordinarily prevail over indwelling depravity; but not without a ſtruggle, as every Chriſtian can teſtify—neither do the better principles always conquer. Sometimes the oppoſing principles, or powers, prevail, and lead to error and wickedneſs. Thus "the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh—ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

* Mark vi. 20.

NEITHER the regenerate, nor the unregenerate, are free to do all that to which the generally governing principle inclines. The difference between the renewed, and the unrenewed, is not that the former is free from temptation, the latter overcome by it, at every attack. Neither is the case. Both meet with temptation, and often that which is severe. Each sometimes overcomes; at other times is overcome by it. But the renewed formed to the habit of attention and watchfulness, and looking to God for help, and acting, in the main, uprightly before God, is usually a conqueror; while the unrenewed, habitually careless, and negligent of watchfulness and prayer, is more often conquered, and hurried into error and wickedness. The renewed are chiefly restrained by love to God and duty; the unrenewed by fear of punishment; Though fear hath a degree of influence on the former; and other considerations, beside fear, are not wholly devoid of influence on the latter.

How far a Christian may be influenced by remaining corruption, and carried away by the prevalence of temptation; or how far a sinner may be restrained by the influence of those principles and considerations, which withstand him in his course, we are unable to determine. That both feel and are influenced by those opposing principles, is not matter of doubt. We experience it in ourselves, whatever our characters may be; and we observe it in others. None are so moulded into the divine image, as to become perfect—neither doth depravity attain so complete an ascend-

ant over any who remain in the body, as to divest them of all restraints, and yield them wholly up to the vicious propensity. Restraints, yea inward restraints operate in degree, on the most depraved.

THIS is a mixed state. The good and the bad are here blended together. "The wheat and the tares must grow together until the harvest"—yea not only in every field, but in every heart. None are perfectly good, or completely bad, while in this world. The finishing traits of character are referred to that to come. In that world we expect, that both the righteous and the wicked, will be perfect in their kind—"the spirits of the just be made perfect"—those of the opposite character put on the full image of their infernal parent.

IMPROVEMENT.

IF those *who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts,* How stands the case with us? Are we thus made to differ from the wicked world? Do we love God—believe on his Son—do his commandments, and trust his grace? Then, "to us to live is Christ, and to die gain." Here we must have trials—this is not our rest. But the time is short. Soon we shall be called "from our labors, and our works will follow us." Soon we shall be with Christ—behold his glory, and rejoice in his presence. Happy state!

BUT let us beware deception. Some "hold a lie in their right hands; cry peace when there is no peace to them." Let us commune with our own hearts; attend to our temper and conduct; inquire whether we have taken up our cross, and

are following Chriſt? Whether the ſpirit of Chriſt dwelleth in us? If we have not his ſpirit, we are none of his. "If we have his ſpirit we walk as he walked." If this is our happy ſtate, we ſhall ere long hear from our Judge, "come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." But if found ſinners, a very different doom awaits us.

SERMON XII.

The aggravated Guilt of him who delivered Christ to Pilate.

JOHN xix. 10, 11.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

JUDEA was conquered by the Romans, and reduced to a province of their empire, before Chriſt ſuffered for the ſins of men. When the Jews conſpired his death, Pilate was governor of that province. The power of life and death was in his hands. Though ſaid to have been devoid of principle, he was unwilling to give ſentence againſt Jeſus. Free from Jewiſh prejudices, he was convinced of Chriſt's innocence; that he had committed no offence, either againſt his own nation, or againſt the Romans; but that for envy he had been arraigned, condemned, and delivered up as a malefactor.

A MIGHTY prince was then expected to arise in Israel. That he would save his people from their enemies, and crush the powers which held them in subjection, was the general idea entertained of him. But the Jews had no expectations of such a deliverer in the Son of Mary; nor did the Roman Governor see aught in him to excite suspicion of a formidable enemy. He wished, therefore, to release him; repeatedly declared him not guilty; and would have set him at liberty, but the Jews opposed. They declared that "by their law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God"—or gave himself out for the expected Messias.

THIS was probably the first hint which Pilate received of this nature, and it seems to have alarmed him. "When he heard that saying he was the more afraid."

PILATE was not an Atheist. He appears to have had some knowledge of a divine existence, and belief of a superintending providence. Living among the Jews, he was, no doubt, acquainted with their religion, and their expectations of a deliverer; and if there was a suspicion that this was that deliverer, it concerned him to act with caution; at least to make inquiry. He therefore returned to the judgment hall, and entered on another examination of the prisoner. He began by inquiring after his origin. "He said to Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer." The text follows, in which we observe the following particulars, viz:

I. PILATE blaming Jeſus, for refuſing to anſwer him—boaſting of his power, and appealing to our Lord, that he poſſeſſed it. *Speakeſt thou not unto me? Knoweſt thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee?*

II. CHRIST reminding Pilate, that he poſſeſſed only delegated power; intimating that he was accountable for the uſe he made of it. *Thou couldeſt have no power againſt me, except it were given thee from above.*

III. CHRIST aggravating the guilt of thoſe who had delivered him to Pilate, from a conſideration of the power which he poſſeſſed, in which there might be an alluſion to Pilate's character as an unprincipled man. *Therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.* We will treat of theſe in their order.

I. WE obſerve Pilate blaming Jeſus for refuſing to anſwer him; boaſting of his power, and appealing to our Lord that he poſſeſſed it. *Speakeſt thou not unto me? Knoweſt thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee?*

BUT why is Chriſt faulted? He had ſaid enough to convince the court of his innocence. The judge had repeatedly and publicly declared it. "I find no fault in him."

CHRIST's ſilence was not ſullen, or contemptuous. He had ſaid enough. His ſilence was prudent—perhaps neceſſary. He had come into the world to ſuffer—"to make his ſoul an offering for ſin." Had he ſaid more, perhaps Pilate had not dared to give ſentence againſt him. Had not

Chriſt died, the ends of his coming had been fruſtrated Therefore was he now dumb before his oppreſſors, agreeably to the prophecy. "He is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep is dumb before his ſhearers, ſo he opened not his mouth."

IT was neceſſary that evidence ſhould be given of Chriſt's innocence, ſufficient to convince the honeſt mind, that he was not a malefactor—that he did not die for his own ſin. This had been given. It was enough—rendered his murderers inexcuſeable. The wiſdom of providence permitted no more.

PILATE declared himſelf convinced. But then he *had power either to crucify Chriſt, or to releaſe him.* He felt himſelf poſſeſſed of this power, and appealed to our Lord whether he did not poſſeſs it.

PILATE knew what was right—what he ought to do. Conſcience directed him to acquit the guiltleſs. But this did not neceſſitate him to do it. He had power to do right. He had power alſo to do wrong.

OTHERS poſſeſs ſimilar power. Every moral agent hath power to obey or diſobey the dictates of his conſcience. It is not the method of heaven to compel men to good, or leave them to be compelled to evil. God intended man to be a free agent, who ſhould chooſe for himſelf the part he would act; and endowed him with a ſelf determining power, to capacitate him to chooſe. Devoid of this power, he could not be accountable.

MAN ought to be governed by reason and conscience. These make known his duty, and offer proper motives to induce him to discharge it. But they do not oblige him to it. It is referred to his own choice. If he prefer doing wrong, to doing right, he may do it.

THIS is exemplified in the case before us. Sufficient evidence was given of Christ's innocence. The judge was convinced, and knew that it was his duty to treat him as innocent. But if to answer worldly ends, or in any respect to gratify depravity, he preferred crucifying the guiltless, he had power to do it. Though Jesus was the Son of God, God had left him in the hands of the enemy. "It was their hour and the power of darkness." They chose and conspired his death. The Jews would not receive such a Messias. Pilate did not choose to offend the Jews. The former urged his crucifixion, for fear "all men would believe on him." The latter was prevailed with to condemn the guiltless, because he wished to gratify the chiefs of the nation which he governed. Both sinned against the light of their own minds, not of necessity, but out of choice—knowingly did wrong to gain worldly ends; or avoid temporal disadvantages.

SINNERS commonly act on the same principles. They can distinguish between good and evil—can "judge of themselves what is right." They know it to be their duty to choose the good, and refuse the evil. But possessing power to counteract the dictates of conscience, often to gain worldly ends,

and answer sinister views, do counteract them—choose that for which they are condemned of themselves.

IT is folly to pretend that our choices are necessary. The proposition involves absurdity. Choice and necessity are often opposites.

SOME bewildered in the labyrinth of metaphysics have doubted the plainest truths—the existence of matter! And even their own existence! But these doubts are a species of madness. To the person of common sense they are unnecessary. Let him only believe his senses, which the author of nature hath given to instruct him, and they will all vanish.

IN the case before us, a single glance inward, carries full conviction that we are free. To offer arguments in proof is superfluous—is trifling—it is to ape the philosopher who attempted to syllogize himself into a conviction of his own existence!*

FROM the knowledge of our capacity, and liberty of choice, ariseth sense of merit and demerit. And thence our expectation of reward or punishment from an enlightened and righteous tribunal. Were we necessitated to actions, now, the most criminal, we should have no sense of guilt; neither should we fear condemnation from a just judge on their account. Did we choose such actions, if we knew our choices to be the effect of invincible, supernal influence, they would give us no concern. On our part, no criminality would be

* *Cogito, ergo sum.* DESCARTES.

attached to them; it would reſt with the efficient. Had Pilate been compelled to give ſentence againſt Chriſt, he would have had no ſenſe of guilt; nor could he have been juſtly criminated. But when the motives which actuated him, and his freedom of choice are conſidered, he muſt have been condemned of himſelf, and of all mankind.

WHEN Pilate appealed to our Lord, that he was poſſeſſed of power, either *to crucify or releaſe him*, the juſtice of the claim is admitted; but then,

II. HE is reminded by the divine priſoner, that he poſſeſſed only delegated power, intimating that he was accountable for the uſe he ſhould make of it. *Thou couldeſt have no power againſt me, except it were given thee from above.*

PILATE probably prided himſelf on his exaltation. He was ſet in authority. In his province, his power reſembled that formerly in the hands of the Babaloniſh tyrant: "Whom he would he ſlew, and whom he would he kept alive." It might flatter his pride to find himſelf the judge of one whom ſome conſidered heir to the crown of Judah; others as being of divine origin—the Son of God—the expected Meſſias, who was to deliver Iſrael, and raiſe them to power. Perhaps he valued himſelf on power to do either right or wrong—that he was neceſſitated to neither. *Knoweſt thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee?*

THOUGH Chriſt had given him no anſwer when Pilate demanded his origin, he now reminds him, boaſting of his power, that it was all derived, or delegated; particularly that which he poſſeſſed

over his priſoner, whom he had acknowledged to be faultleſs: *Thou couldeſt have no power againſt me except it were given thee from above.* As though he had ſaid, "Remember Pilate, that with all your high feelings, and parade of power, you have no power which is properly your own; none which is not derived from above; none for the uſe of which you are not accountable. "There is one who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomſoever he will, and ſetteth up over them the baſeſt of men." To anſwer his myſterious purpoſes you are now in authority; but forget not whence it is derived, and the conſequences of abuſing it. "There may be oppreſſion of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and juſtice in a province, but marvel not at the matter; for he who is higher than the higheſt regardeth"—he will ſet all right in the end. For the uſe which you make of your powers, you muſt give account to him."

SUCH ſeems to have been the import of Chriſt's reply to this haughty ruler, boaſting of his powers, on this occaſion. What ſentiments it raiſed in the breaſt of this Roman, we are not informed; but the reply was full of ſalutary counſel and inſtruction. Had Pilate regarded it as he ought, it would have prevented him from having been a principal actor in the vileſt enormity ever committed on this globe.

PILATE ſeems to have felt in degree, the weight of Chriſt's reply, and to have been the more concerned. For it follows: "From thenceforth Pi-

late ſought to releaſe him." He had ſought it before. "From thenceforth," he was yet more deſirous to ſet Chriſt at liberty, and exerted himſelf more earneſtly to perſuade the Jews to conſent to his diſcharge.

BUT this was not all which Chriſt ſaid on the occaſion; he added,

III. ANOTHER obſervation, which related to thoſe who had conſpired his death, and brought him to Pilate's bar; perhaps more particularly to Judas, who had betrayed him—*therefore* HE *that delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.* If only one perſon is here intended, as having delivered Chriſt to Pilate, Judas muſt have been the perſon.

THAT Pilate poſſeſſed ſuch power, the power of life and death, is declared an aggravation of his guilt, who had delivered him to Pilate; in which there might be an alluſion to Pilate's character as an unprincipled man. He was known to be under the government of appetite, paſſion, or ſelfiſhneſs. He had been often guilty of injuſtice and cruelty in his public adminiſtration. Therefore had his enemies the greater ſin in delivering Jeſus unto him.

SUCH we apprehend to be the meaning of the text; which hath been thought to be obſcure and difficult. The difficulty will ſtrike us, if we read the whole paſſage as it ſtands in the tranſlation. *Pilate ſaith unto him, Speakeſt thou not unto me? Knoweſt thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee? Jeſus anſwered,*

Thou couldeſt have no power againſt me, except it were given thee from above ; THEREFORE *he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin.*

THE laſt clauſe ſeems at firſt view, to refer to the words which immediately precede, which is to underſtand our Savior as aggravating the guilt of thoſe who delivered him to Pilate, from the conſideration of Pilate's power having been derived *from above.*

THIS cannot be the meaning. All power in the hands of creatures, may be traced to the ſame ſource. It is derived *from above.* But the ſource whence power is derived is out of the queſtion reſpecting the merit or demerit attending the uſe of it. The guilt of him who delivered Chriſt to Pilate, was neither increaſed nor diminiſhed by it.

THE conſequence, THEREFORE *he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater ſin,* looks back to words preceding—*I have power to crucify thee, and have power to releaſe thee.* His ſin was great, who delivered Chriſt to ſuch an one ; to one poſſeſſed of his power, and of his character ; much greater than though he had delivered him to one devoid of power to crucify ; or to one who was a man of principle. Delivering Jeſus to Pilate was like delivering Daniel to the lions ; or the three children to the fiery furnace. The rage of the lions, and the power of the flames, were reſtrained by the greater power of God ; but no thanks to the enemies of thoſe holy men—they could be conſidered in no other light than that of murderers.

THE Supreme ruler could have reſtrained Pilate, and have prevented his having yielded to Chriſt's enemies, and given him to their will. But the determinate counſel of heaven had otherwiſe reſolved before the incarnation. "It was neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, and enter into his glory." Therefore was he given up to the rage of his enemies who thirſted for his blood.

CHRIST'S crucifixion was the deſign of his enemies in delivering him to Pilate. This was their ſin. God overruled it for good, and made it the occaſion of glory to himſelf, and ſalvation to ſinners. This is no alleviation of their guilt. "They meant not ſo; neither did their heart think ſo. For envy did they deliver him."

WHAT Chriſt ſaid concerning the ſource, whence Pilate derived his power, comes in by a parentheſis. It is unconnected with the other parts of the ſentence, which is complete without it. "I have power to crucify thee—The greater is their ſin who delivered me to you: But you have no power againſt me that you have not received from above." "Remember it is derived from heaven, and to the God of heaven you are accountable for the uſe you make of it."

THIS memento, which comes in by the bye, was a proper caution to that ruler not to abuſe his power. Had he acted agreeable to the evident deſign of it—ſo acted, as to have been juſtified to himſelf, and able to give a good account to the ſource of power, for the uſe he made of that which was delegated to him, it would have pre-

vented him from delivering Jeſus to his enemies, and kept him clear of a crime, the perpetration of which, darkened even the natural world, and threw it into convulſions!

PILATE felt ſo much force in the warning, that he was perplexed. He wiſhed to acquit the priſoner; of whoſe innocence he was ſatisfied; but he feared the Jews. He was probably apprehenſive that they might inform againſt him at Rome, as he knew, that much of his paſt adminiſtration could not be juſtified. He had not therefore the courage to tell the Jews, that juſtice forbad, and he would not condemn the guiltleſs. What had he to do with juſtice, who had often ſported with it, to gratify his paſſions, or gain his ſelfiſh purpoſes? Who had done it openly, and it was matter of public notoriety? The Jews urged, "if thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend." Pilate trembled; but his fear of Cæſar prevailed above his fear of God. "He conſented therefore, that it ſhould be as they required, and delivered Jeſus to their will."

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHEN we contemplate theſe things, what a ſeries of wonders riſe to our view? The ſtate of man—the way in which he was brought into it; and that in which only he could be delivered from it, are all myſterious! Man had ruined himſelf—ruined his race! Human guilt could not be expiated without blood! Without blood divine! Man had ſinned, and the Son of God muſt ſuffer, or ſin could not be pardoned! No other ſacrifice

could make atonement. Chriſt conſented to undertake the work of our redemption—to "make his ſoul an offering for ſin!" But how? He muſt take human nature! Become man! Wonder of wonders! Still difficulty remained. He muſt die, "the juſt for the unjuſt!" In what manner could this be accompliſhed? Chriſt's ſufferings would be, of all crimes, the moſt ſinful, in thoſe by whom he ſuffered. No good man could knowingly take part in them. They could only be the work of Chriſt's enemies, and of the enemies of God, and goodneſs.

IT is no ſmall part of this myſtery, that the good ſhould oppoſe, and that it ſhould be their duty to oppoſe, that which had become neceſſary for man's ſalvation! And that the wicked ſhould be engaged to do that which was requiſite for this end! And that their enmity againſt God and the Redeemer, ſhould excite and influence them thereto!

BUT though every thing relating to this matter is too deep for us, Deity had no embarraſſment. To omniſcience all was eaſy and obvious. The great Supreme needed only to ſit at helm, ſuperintend and overrule the luſts of apoſtate creatures, to effect the purpoſes of his grace! Need only to permit man freely to follow his own inclinations! "The wrath of man would thus be made to praiſe God;" and the deſigns of mercy be accompliſhed! The greateſt good be occaſioned by the greateſt evil! God glorified, and ſinners ſaved!

THE myſtery of redemption was veiled, till atonement had been made for ſin. That ſatisfac-

tion was to be made to divine juſtice, by the ſufferings of a divine perſon, remained a hidden myſtery, till explained by the event. This was neceſſary. Had the enemy been able to penetrate the deſign, theſe things would not have been done. Satan would not have inſtigated, nor his adherents crucified the Lord of glory.

THE powers of darkneſs were laboring to ſubvert and deſtroy; they vainly thought to defeat the purpoſes of grace; but were made inſtrumental in their accompliſhment. "The wiſe were taken in their own craftineſs; the purpoſes of the froward carried headlong; but the divine purpoſes ſtood, and God performed all his pleaſure! Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"

II. ANOTHER thing which our ſubject ſuggeſts to our conſideration, is the way of God with man. God hath provided a ſavior, and offered ſalvation —he hath pointed out the way of duty, and commanded us to walk in it—allured us thereto by promiſes, and barred up the way to deſtruction by threatenings. Thoſe who enjoy the goſpel, have life and death ſet before them. But no conſtraint is laid upon them—they chooſe for themſelves, and the conſequences follow.

THOUGH the beſt ſervices of fallen man are imperfect, and mercy offered in Chriſt his only hope, he hath reaſon to expect ſaving mercy while ſeeking it in the way of duty, and only while thus ſeeking. When we "keep conſciences void of offence,

toward God and men, then are we ſatisfied from ourſelves," and expect the approbation of our judge. When we act differently, we are condemned of ourſelves, and tremble to approach the enlightened tribunal.

THESE views are natural—they are written on the heart, or conſcience, by the creator's hand, and indicate what we may reaſonably expect from him who knows our hearts—from him who is moral governor of all worlds.

As we know ourſelves to be free agents, and as we poſſeſs only delegated powers, we are certainly accountable for the uſe which we make of thoſe powers. The duties which riſe out of ſuch a ſituation, and the conſequences which will follow, according to the manner in which we act our parts, need not to be pointed out—they lie open to every eye.

III. WHEN we conſider the ſtruggle in Pilate's breaſt, between ſenſe of duty, and a deſire to pleaſe the world, and how it terminated, we ſee the danger of wanting fixed principles of rectitude—of not being determined, at all events, to do right, whatever may be the conſequences.

PILATE's duty was plain. He knew his duty—felt his obligation to do it, and wiſhed to do it, that he might feel eaſy, and not be concerned for conſequences. But he had formerly ſacrificed conſcience, to appetite, paſſion, or ſelfiſhneſs, and it was known. This expoſed him to temptation again to do wrong. He who had violated conſcience to gain worldly ends, might do it again.

Pilate had expoſed himſelf by paſt conduct—could not juſtify his paſt adminiſtration—his enemies might report him to Cæſar—he could not anſwer for himſelf before Cæſar; but if he would again violate conſcience, oblige the Jews, in a matter they had much at heart, he hoped their friendſhip —that they would ſpread a veil over his paſt conduct, and report in his favor at Rome.

SUCH was the ſituation into which he had brought himſelf by wilful deviations from duty—thence temptations to farther and greater deviations—temptations not eaſily overcome—temptations by which he was overcome, and ſeduced to the moſt horrid wickedneſs—crucifying the Lord of glory!

THOSE who would maintain their integrity, and ſtand in the evil day, muſt reſolve to do right; to obey the dictates of conſcience; they muſt beware the beginnings of ſin; hold no parley with the enemy; never heſitate, whether it is not beſt, in any caſe to yield to temptation; nor make attempts to pleaſe thoſe who wiſh them, and dare to importune them to counteract the light of their own minds—"trimming their way to ſeek love."

To enter on ſuch a courſe, is to go on forbidden ground. It is to paſs the bounds, and go into the way of ſeduction. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, paſs not by it, turn from it, and paſs away."*

* Proverbs iv. 14.

WHAT the poet obſerves, reſpecting one ſpecies of temptation, holds, in degree, of every other.

"In ſpite of all the virtue we can boaſt,
"The *perſon* who deliberates is loſt."—*Young.*

SERMON XIII.

The Trial of Peter's love to Christ.

JOHN xxi. 15, 16, 17.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he said to him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

"THIS was the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples after he was risen from the dead." But it was not the last time. "He often shewed himself alive after his passion, being seen of them for forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Once he appeared to a Christian assembly—"was seen by above five hundred brethren" at the same time. When he had given to his disciples those infalli-

ble proofs of his reſurrection, and thoſe inſtructions, which their work required, "while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their ſight."

THIS viſit was made to a part of the diſciples at the ſea of Tiberias; whither they had retired after the crucifixion; but whether to follow their former occupation, or in expectation of meeting there the riſen Savior, who had promiſed to manifeſt himſelf to them in Galilee, we are not informed. They were however engaged in fiſhing, when after the fruitleſs labors of a night, they ſaw Jeſus in the morning ſtanding on the ſhore.

GOD looks favorably on his people when he ſees them employed in honeſt ſecular buſineſs; and ſometimes manifeſts himſelf to them.

THIS was a kind inſtructive viſit, to theſe diſciples; eſpecially to Peter. Peter was of a bold, forward diſpoſition, naturally eager and confident, and ſo ſtrongly attached to his Lord, that he thought nothing could ſeparate him, from him—neither allurements, nor terrors. Therefore when Chriſt warned his family of his approaching ſufferings, and the effect which they would have on them—that "they would be offended becauſe of him—yea be ſcattered from him and leave him alone:" Peter did not believe him! He had ſuch love to Chriſt, and felt ſo determined to adhere to him, in all extremities, that he dared to declare, "Though all ſhall be offended, yet will not I." And when his Lord, aſſured him that he would thrice deny him that very night, he was not con-

vinced! It only ſerved to draw from him a more vehement and poſitive aſſertion, "If I ſhould die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wiſe." But he ſoon found his miſtake. Three times, before the next morning dawned, did he deny his Savior—with oaths and imprecations did he deny him!

THIS ſinner was ſoon renewed by repentance. And one deſign of Chriſt's viſit at this time, ſeems to have been to aſſure the penitent, that his ſin, in "denying the Lord who bought him," was pardoned, and that he was confirmed in the office to which he had been previouſly called. But the manner in which this was done carried in it a reproof, which muſt have called his ſin to remembrance, cauſing his ſoul to be humbled in him. Let us turn our attention to the ſubject.

IN *the text we ſee Chriſt queſtioning Peter, and trying his love—Peter appealing to Chriſt, for the reality of it—and Chriſt directing Peter how to manifeſt his love to him—by feeding his flock.*

I. WE ſee Chriſt queſtioning Peter and trying his love. *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me more than theſe?*

SIMON was the original name of this apoſtle. Cephas and Peter, which ſignify a rock, or ſtone, were names given him of Chriſt, expreſſive of that firmneſs of character, for which he was remarkable. Theſe though commonly uſed, after they were given him, were omitted on this occaſion; probably as a tacit reproof of his denial of his Lord, a little before; which had been occaſioned

by the failure of his courage—by the deficiency of his firmneſs.

THE manner in which his divine maſter, here addreſſed this diſciple, ſeemed to imply a doubt of his love; or of the ſupremacy of it.

CHRIST knew the heart. Peter's love was not hidden from him. But while he dwelt with men, he treated people according to their apparent characters; thereby ſetting an example to his followers, who can judge others only by appearances, or that which is external.

JESUS did not immediately addreſs himſelf to Peter, as ſoon as he had made himſelf known; but after he had been ſome time in the company of theſe friends and followers, and they had made a friendly meal together, he turned to this diſciple, and in the preſence of his brethren, who had witneſſed his high profeſſions of love, and determination never to forſake or deny him, and the part he had acted ſoon after, addreſſed him, as in the text; *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me more than theſe?*

WHAT had happened a little before, rendered this queſtion highly proper. One of the twelve had fallen. One, whom the others had not ſuſpected. Nothing had appeared, which marked out Judas for the traitor, during the time of his going out and in with the other diſciples. Chriſt, though he knew him, and gave frequent intimations that there was a traitor among them, had never deſignated him. When they were told that one of them ſhould betray their Lord, their eyes were

not turned upon Judas, but each one appeared jealous of himself. "Lord is it I?" But his hypocrify had now been made manifeft and he had gone to his own place." Such had he been found, who was the fteward in Chrift's family! That with refpect to him, the other difciples had been deceived, now appeared. And Peter, who had been fo forward and zealous, and profeffed fuch warm love to Chrift, had lately denied him! And though he had returned, profeffing himfelf a penitent, his fincerity is queftioned, and he is called on, to clear up his character.

IT was important that this matter fhould be determined, that the other difciples might know how to treat this late offender—whether he was to be received as a brother, or to be confidered as depofed from his office, and to be fucceeded by another. This was probably the reafon of Chrift's addreffing him, as here in the prefence of his brethren. *Loveft thou me more than thefe?*

IF he had the love of Chrift dwelling in him, and that love was fupreme, Chrift would forgive the paft and continue to employ him as a fhepherd to feed his flock. Therefore did he apply to this late offending paftor, and demand of him in the prefence of his brethren, whether he really loved him, with fuch a love as was neceffary to conftitute him a difciple.

THIS had been long before fettled, and determined, to be love fuperior to that which is borne to the world, or the riches and honors, or friendfhips and relations of it, or even life in it. "He

that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: He that loveth ſon or daughter more than me is not worthy of me: He that taketh not his croſs and followeth after me, is not worthy of me: He that findeth his life ſhall loſe it; and he that loſeth his life for my ſake ſhall find it."*

THE purport of this and parallel declarations of the divine teacher, are not obſcure; they plainly teach that we cannot be Chriſt's diſciples, unleſs our love to him ſurpaſſeth that which we bear any thing terreſtrial. Therefore the queſtion put to Simon, agreeably to theſe prior definitions of that love to Chriſt which is neceſſary to conſtitute a perſon his diſciple, marked particularly by the laſt clauſe of it, *more than theſe?*

EXPOSITORS have generally put another ſenſe on this queſtion, and in our apprehenſion, a miſtaken ſenſe. They have conſidered our Lord as inquiring of Simon whether his love exceeded that of his fellow diſciples. *Loveſt thou me more than theſe thy fellow diſciples love me?*

THIS cannot be the ſenſe of the queſtion. This is a queſtion which Simon could not have anſwered; and which it would have been wrong in him to have attempted to anſwer; a queſtion therefore which Chriſt would not have put to him, or required him to anſwer. To have anſwered it, Simon muſt have known the hearts of others; but to have pretended to the knowledge of them, would have been claiming a divine prerogative.

* Matthew x. 37.

BUT Peter had declared on Chriſt's forewarning them that "they would all be offended becauſe of him, although all ſhall be offended, yet will not I."

HE had indeed made that declaration; but he had not judged others, or pretended to determine that they would, or would not, be offended becauſe of him. Peter knew that he loved Chriſt—that the love of Chriſt was generally a governing principle in his heart. He felt the ſtrength of it ſo ſenſibly at that time, that he did not conceive it poſſible, that any dangers or ſufferings could ever induce him to forſake his Lord; or in any reſpect, be offended becauſe of him. Therefore his confident declaration, that he ſhould ſtand by him in every extremity, though he ſhould be left to ſtand alone. Leaving the future conduct of others, to determine the meaſure of their love to Chriſt, he ſpake only of his own. "Though all men ſhall be offended becauſe of thee, yet will not I be offended." As though he had ſaid;

"I DO not pretend to know the hearts of others; but I think I know my own; and that I have ſuch love to thee my Lord, that nothing can ſeparate me from thee." Jeſus anſwered, "Verily I ſay unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice." Peter replied, "Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewiſe alſo ſaid all his diſciples."

THEY no doubt all ſpoke the language of their hearts; all expreſſed the determination of their ſouls at the time; though they were ſoon convinced of their miſtake—that they did not ſuffi-

ciently know themſelves—their own weakneſs—the need they ſtood in of divine ſupport.

PETER, in particular, expreſſed the genuine feelings of his own warm and honeſt heart; but without the ſmalleſt intimation, that he ſuſpected his fellow diſciples; or pretended to judge them.

AND is there reaſon to think that Chriſt would put him upon this work? That he would require him to judge them, and compare his love with theirs? Eſpecially when we conſider Chriſt's former prohibition of judging others, which he had early made a law to his diſciples. "Judge not that ye be not judged:" And remember that Chriſtians are directed, "in all lowlineſs of mind, to eſteem others better than themſelves."

SOME have been diſpoſed to think highly of themſelves, and meanly of others—to ſay to others, "Stand by thyſelf; come not near me; I am holier than thou"—Some, to "compare themſelves with others and exalt themſelves above others." But not ſo the humble Chriſtian—Not ſo the meek follower of Jeſus. Nor is there any thing favorable to ſuch temper and conduct to be found in the ſacred volume. The ſpirit and tenor of the divine rule is oppoſed to it, and ſpeaks perſons of this character, objects of divine averſion.

THIS temper, and its oppoſite, are exemplified in the phariſee and publican, who went up to the temple to pray. "God I thank thee, that I am not as other men—or even as this publican." Thus the phariſee. But "the publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes to

heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a ſinner." We know which of theſe met the divine approbation.

Now, is it ſuppoſable, that the Savior would put a queſtion to Simon, which would countenance the phariſaic diſpoſition? Or that he would require him to judge the hearts of others? Or compare himſelf with others, in a matter which required the knowledge of their hearts?

IT ſeems ſtrange that this ſhould be thought by any one, to be the ſenſe of Chriſt's queſtion to Peter; much more that this ſhould be the moſt common conſtruction of it, by expoſitors.

II. IN anſwer to our Lord's queſtion to Simon, we find him in the text appealing to our Lord, for the reality of his love. "*Thou knoweſt that I love thee—Thou knoweſt all things, Thou knoweſt that I love thee.*"

IT is obſervable that Peter reſts the whole matter on Chriſt's knowledge of the heart. Peter makes no plea—adduces no evidence—mentions no circumſtance, evidential of his love to Chriſt, but refers the matter back directly to him, as the ſearcher of hearts and leaves it with him. *Thou knoweſt that I love thee.*

THE grieved, and diſtreſſed apoſtle, could have mentioned many things as proofs of his love to Jeſus; yea of the ſtrength of his affection for him. He might have pleaded his profeſſion reſpecting Chriſt, at the time when he was honored with the name of Peter—an honorable diſtinction, and deſigned to recommend him to the acceptance of his

fellow diſciples.* He might have mentioned what paſſed, when Chriſt aſked the twelve, whether they "would alſo go away?" When many offended at his doctrine forſook him, after having followed him, and profeſſed themſelves his diſciples. Simon had on that occaſion made a noble profeſſion, ſhewing that he was a diſciple indeed—"Lord, to whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life. And we believe and are ſure, that thou art that Chriſt, the ſon of the living God?" He might have pleaded, that he had ſingly dared to draw his ſword againſt the multitude, which came to apprehend his Lord—that he had reſolutely attacked them, and maintained the conflict, with the whole band, till diſarmed by a command from his divine Sovereign to put up its ſword into its ſheath—that he had followed Chriſt, when moſt of the others forſook him and fled—had ventured into the judgment hall to attend his trial and witneſs the event—that though there ſurpriſed and terrified into a denial of Chriſt, when he ſaw him contrary to his expectations, reſign himſelf to death, by the wicked hands of unbelieving Jews, aided by heathen ſoldiers, yet that only one kind look from his captive Lord, had brought him to repent and mourn in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, that he had not agreeably to his former purpoſe, died with his divine maſter—He might have alleged, that he had not forſaken Chriſt's family and friends, even when Chriſt hung on the croſs or ſlept in the tomb; though his moſt faithful followers, had then been

* Matthew xv. 13—19.

ready to conclude, that they had been deceived, when "they truſted that it was he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael"—that he had watched Chriſt's corpſe, and been with the firſt to examine the report of his reſurrection, and among the firſt who believed it—and that even then, at that appearance of his Lord, he only of thoſe preſent, when they ſaw him ſtanding on the ſhore, could not wait till the boat ſhould convey him to the land, but had thrown himſelf into the ſea, leaving the fiſh which they had incloſed, to continue in their own element, and ſwam to the ſhore, not perhaps, without endangering his life, that he might not delay to receive and welcome his Lord.

THESE, and probably many other things, evidential of the reality and ſtrength of his love to Chriſt, Simon might have alleged, notwithſtanding his late defection—diſtinctions, which perhaps none of his fellow diſciples could have pleaded; and which, had any ſhare of the phariſaic ſpirit reſted on him, might have induced him to claim that ſuperiority to his brethren, which a certain church afterwards attributed to him.

To have mentioned theſe, might have ſtrengthened the charity of his fellow diſciples towards him; but he knew that none of them were requiſite, to convince Chriſt of his love. Though he had done, and ſuffered, and expoſed himſelf for Chriſt, more than others, he put in no claim to a reward—he had done leſs than was his duty. His dependence was on grace. Therefore did he decline the mention, of what ſome would have

boaſted, and appealed directly to his Savior, as the ſearcher of hearts, to judge of the matter in queſtion—of his love, and the meaſure of it—appealed to him who had put the queſtion, *loveſt thou me more than theſe?* To clear up his character and bear witneſs to the reality and meaſure of his affection toward him—*Yea Lord, thou knoweſt that I love thee.*

IN this appeal he not only ſhewed his ſincerity, but reflected honor on Chriſt, by an acknowledgment of his divinity. The knowledge of the heart is the prerogative of Deity. "I the Lord ſearch the heart, I try the reins, to give to every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings. The Lord ſearcheth all hearts, and underſtandeth the imaginations of the thoughts." The exalted Savior, afterwards made himſelf known as poſſeſſing this power, and appointed to exerciſe it, in adjuſting the rewards of another life. "All the churches ſhall know that I am he who ſearcheth the hearts and reins; and I will give to every one of you according to your works." But this had not been clearly revealed, when Chriſt paid the viſit to his diſciples at the ſea of Tiberias. The Chriſtian diſpenſation was then ſcarcely ſet up. Darkneſs ſtill brooded on the minds, even of the apoſtles. It continued till the outpouring of the Spirit, on the day of Penteceſt, when the promiſe of "the Comforter, to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance," was fulfilled. But Simon ſeems to have anticipated theſe public manifeſtations and

diſcoveries—to have at this time been convinced, that Chriſt was omniſcient—THOU KNOWEST ALL THINGS; *thou knoweſt that I love thee.*

IN this appeal, Chriſt was farther honored, by Simon's open, public reliance on his goodneſs. He had then lately diſhonored Chriſt, by a ſhameful denial—a denial, when to have acknowledged him, would have done him the greateſt honor. But ſuch was his confidence in the goodneſs of his Lord, that he dared to truſt himſelf with him—had no concern, that reſentment of the part he had acted, would induce him, in whom he truſted, to overlook his penitence, and paſs his humble confidence unnoticed—did not fear to truſt himſelf in Chriſt's hands, and leave it to him to make known his character to his fellow diſciples.

IN theſe things the faith of Simon, and the nature of his faith appeared. He not only believed Jeſus to be the Chriſt, but he believed the divinity of Chriſt. His faith did not terminate in a bare aſſent, but convinced of his ſufficiency, and of his juſtice, and mercy and readineſs to forgive the returning penitent, he gave himſelf up to Chriſt and truſted in him to pardon his ſins and ſave him by his grace. Though ſenſible of his own demerit, fear did not drive him away from the Savior, but induced him to return to him and put his whole truſt in him.

SUCH is the nature of juſtifying faith. Thoſe who are ſubjects of it, deeply ſenſible of their ſins, "look to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the ſin of the world," and place all their dependence

on him; and they are not diſappointed—"Whoſo believeth ſhall not be aſhamed."

THUS Simon's faith and love were owned of Chriſt; and this late offender not only pardoned, but continued in his office; a paſtor of Chriſt's flock. *Feed my lambs—Feed my ſheep*, were the replies to the appeals made by the offender, that he loved the Savior. In this manner was he directed,

III. To manifeſt his love to Chriſt.——It might have been thought that Simon had fallen from his office when he denied his Lord; with oaths and imprecations, denied his knowledge of him. If ſo, he was here reſtored; Chriſt entruſted him again with the care "of his flock—which he had purchaſed with his blood;" and reappointed him to "give them their meat in due ſeaſon." His having had this charge here given him, argued the pardon of his offences, and his reſtoration to favor. He would not have been required to do the work of an apoſtle, had not his tranſgreſſion been forgiven, and his ſin been blotted out. Judas had no ſuch truſt repoſed in him after his fall; no ſuch duty required of him. "By his tranſgreſſion he fell from his miniſtry and apoſtleſhip, that he might go to his own place, and another take his office." Judas repented; but not with repentance unto life. His repentance led to death by his own hand. Diverſe was that of Simon, both in its nature and effects. His was "Godly ſorrow, which wrought repentance unto life"——which cauſed him to devote himſelf wholly to the ſervice

of the Redeemer, and at laſt to lay down his life for his ſake.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR ſubject teacheth the folly of ſelf dependence. Who ever appeared to have ſtronger confidence in himſelf than Peter? Yet few have fallen more ſhamefully than he.

IF we lean to ourſelves, like things will probably befall us. Our ſtrength is weakneſs. Our enemies are many and powerful; they are long verſed in the arts of deception; well acquainted with our weakneſs; know how, and when, and where to attack us to advantage. Left to ourſelves, we ſhould doubtleſs be ſnared and taken by them.

SIMON was naturally bold and reſolute; had great love to Chriſt, and zeal for his honor: Yet all did not enable him "to ſtand in the evil day." If Peter fell, who, left to himſelf, can ſtand? Not one. But God is able to make the weakeſt and moſt feeble ſtand, and will make them ſtand if they truſt in him. "My grace is ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs." Bleſſed are they who truſt in him.

II. AN high opinion of a perſon's own ſtrength, or love to God and the Redeemer, is moſt commonly the prelude to a fall. When one thinks himſelf ſtrong, and feels ſecure, he is ſoon taught his weakneſs and dependence, and the need he ſtands in of a divine guardian, by ſome advantage gained over him by the enemy: Whereas, thoſe who are ſenſible of their own weakneſs, and truſt

in God, are holden up, and made to ſtand. "Moſt gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon—me for when I am weak, then am I ſtrong."

III. As ſelf knowledge is of great importance, neceſſary to our reforming that which is amiſs, and to our truſting in *him* who is able to keep us, we ſhould often try ourſelves, as in his preſence—*his*, to whom our hearts are open. It becomes us often to retire inward, and examine whether the love of Chriſt dwelleth in us? *Whether we love him more than theſe?* Than the world and the things of it? If Chriſt is not uppermoſt in our hearts, "we are not worthy of him." But if we can anſwer the queſtion put to Simon, as he anſwered it, *Lord thou knoweſt all things; thou knoweſt that I love thee*, happy are we. We remain in a ſtate of imperfection—may often have occaſion to mourn ſome practical denial of Chriſt; ſtill, if *he who knoweth all things, knoweth that we love him*, our love to him will not be overlooked; he will own us before his Father, and reward us with eternal rewards.

IV. CHRIST's diſciples, while in the body, often err; if acquainted with ourſelves, we muſt often know this of ourſelves; do we then ſee our faults?

IF any who call themſelves Chriſtians live in neglect of ſelf examination, and are conſequently ſtrangers to themſelves, there is great reaſon to fear that they are ſtrangers alſo to the Chriſtian life. The Chriſtian communes much with his own heart, and finds daily occaſion to mourn be-

fore God, that his ſervice is ſo defective, and that he ſo often denies his Lord, by heedleſs lapſes, or by ſuffering temptation to have ſuch power over him. When the Lord looked on Peter, and thereby brought to his remembrance the warnings which he had given him, his confidence in himſelf, and then his fall, he went out and wept bitterly.

EVERY Chriſtian hath a meaſure of this ſpirit, and is grieved at his heart, when he calls to mind his ſhameful denials of his Lord. If any, who think themſelves his diſciples are blind to their faults, or little affected with them—ready to excuſe or extenuate them, eſpecially if hidden from the world; or feel reluctant to take ſhame to themſelves, when they have fallen, it nearly concerns them to examine the grounds of their hope toward God; there is reaſon to fear that they "hold a lie in their right hands." Thoſe who are Chriſt's diſcern their faults; confeſs and forſake them. Their falls are made the occaſion of greater watchfulneſs, and care to keep themſelves from every wicked thing, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God. May he grant this to be our temper, for his mercy's ſake in Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

Gifts no certain Evidence of Grace.

LUKE x. 20.

In this rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven.

ABUNDANT notice of Chriſt's coming preceded that intereſting event. "To him gave all the prophets witneſs."

NEITHER was his entrance here unatteſted. It was announced by an angelic choir; by a miraculous ſtar; and by a band of eaſtern magi. The manger which contained him, was particularly pointed out to the ſhepherds, and his perſon deſignated by inſpired Simon and Anna. Again,

WHEN entering on his miniſtry, witneſs was given for him, both from heaven, and on earth; from heaven by the viſible deſcent of the holy Ghoſt, which reſted on him, and by a voice teſtifying that he was the Son of God; on earth by John, and ſoon after by the ſeventy: For theſe were ſent to prepare his way, and introduce him to his work.

JOHN was sent before, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"—"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The seventy, to declare him then entering on his ministry—"The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."—John did no miracles; but the seventy witnessed Christ's truth, and their own by wonders wrought in his name. In the orders given to them at their mission, we find them only directed to heal the sick, as an evidence of Christ's arrival, and their being sent of him; but by the report made at their return they appeared to have been empowered to cast out devils. They probably did all the mighty works done by the twelve, and by their Lord. Thus they prepared his way.

DOING miracles in Christ's name would raise in those who witnessed it, a desire to see him of whom they spake, and whose power they displayed: And "they were sent two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come.

HAD they only proclaimed his arrival, some might have listened; but few would have "believed their report." Greater evidence than their word would have been demanded; as was afterwards of Christ—"What sign shewest thou, that we may believe thee?" Neither would the demand have been unreasonable. Special messages require special evidence; and it is always given to those who are sent of God.

EVERY deceiver may pretend to a divine mission; but we are forbidden to "believe every spirit, and

commanded to try the ſpirits." The church at Epheſus is commended for having obeyed this command—"Thou haſt tried them which ſay that they are apoſtles, and are not, and haſt found them liars."

OUR Savior ſpeaking of the Jews' rejection of him, aggravates their guilt, by a conſideration of the plenitude of the evidence which had been given them of his truth. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin—but now they have no cloak for their ſin—they have both ſeen and hated both me and my Father."*

AT the return of the ſeventy they appear to have been elated with the exerciſe of the miraculous powers which had been delegated to them—"And the ſeventy returned again with joy, ſaying, Lord, even the devils are ſubject unto us through thy name."

THEY had witneſſed Chriſt's miracles, but ſeem not to have wrought miracles themſelves till now; and when they found themſelves able to do the mighty works which they had admired in their Lord they were filled with joy.

HAVING made their report, Chriſt enlarged their powers and promiſed them protection—"Behold I give you power to tread on ſerpents and ſcorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing ſhall by any means hurt you." But to prevent them from ſetting an undue value on theſe diſtinctions, the caution in the text is ſubjoined—"*Notwithſtanding, in this rejoice not that*

* John xv. 22—24.

the ſpirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

IN diſcuſſing the ſubject, we will firſt *conſider the caution or prohibition—In this rejoice not that the ſpirits are ſubject unto you; then the command—But rather rejoice becauſe your names are written in heaven.*

I. WE are to conſider the caution, or prohibition—*In this rejoice not, &c.*

BUT why not? Was it not matter of joy that ſpirits, evil ſpirits were ſubject to them? That they were able to diſlodge them from the bodies of men, by commanding them in Chriſt's name? Certainly. This enabled them to anſwer the ends of their miſſion, which had been but very partially anſwered without it. Wherefore then the prohibition?

IT is rather the exceſs of their joy, than the joy itſelf which is here forbidden. They ſeem to have placed an undue value on this power; to have exalted it above its place, particularly as it concerned themſelves. This was the firſt thing they mentioned at their return; nothing beſide ſeems to have made ſo deep an impreſſion upon them, or to have given them equal ſelf importance.

To them there were other things more intereſting and important; that they were accepted of God, and numbered among the faithful, and that their *names were written in heaven,* were to them occaſions of much greater joy.

THE gift of miracles proved their miſſion, and drew the attention of thoſe who witneſſed their

mighty works; but this was not a saving gift. A person might possess it, yet remain unrenewed, and perish in his sins.

SOME appear to have exercised this power, who professed no relation to Christ, but were openly connected with his enemies. This is evident from his expostulation with those who attributed to infernal agency, the authority with which he extorted obedience from evil spirits—"If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges."* The same appears from another incident, recorded by St. Mark—"And John answered, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. And Jesus said, Forbid him not: For there is no man who shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me."†

IT seems that some who had seen the disciples cast out devils in Christ's name, though not themselves his disciples, attempted to do the same and succeeded; and that things of this nature were not uncommon after Christ began his ministry; though it did not always, if at all succeed, after his sufferings and exaltation.‡

THE gift of miracles, like other gifts, was distinct from sanctifying grace. This grace was often joined with that gift; but not always. There was no necessary connexion between them.

UNDER the former dispensation, the gift of prophecy did not certainly argue a renewed na-

* Luke xi. 19. † St. Mark ix. 38, 39. ‡ Acts xix. 13.

ture. It was sometimes given without it. Balaam had this gift. The deceiver who brought back the man of God who was sent from Judah to reprove Jeroboam, had it. By divine order he told the Jew what would happen to him, because he disobeyed the word of the Lord, and returned to eat bread in that place. Neither is there a trait of sanctity visible on the prophet Jonah, though he was compelled to bear God's messages to Ninevah, and used to make other special communications to men.

UNDER the gospel dispensation divine administration hath been the same. Judas had doubtless the gift of miracles in common with his fellow disciples; and many will appeal to the judge in the great day, that they "have prophesied in his name, in his name cast out devils, and in his name done many wonderful works, to whom he will profess, I never knew you," and whom he will send away among the workers of iniquity.

MEN are too often estimated by their gifts. Many consider those as the best men who possess the most enlarged, and especially the most showy talents; and despise those of a different description, as though their gifts and graces must be equal. But this is wrong. A person may possess the talents of an angel of light, who hath the temper of an infernal. Such is probably the state of apostate spirits. And some of the greatest of mankind have been some of the worst and most abandoned.

THOUGH this muſt be evident to the conſiderate, there is yet a diſpoſition in man to judge others, yea, and himſelf too, by gifts apart from the grace which ſanctifies gifts, and renders them beneficial, both to the poſſeſſor, and to the world; and at the ſame time keeps the poſſeſſor humble, and prevents him from thinking of himſelf, above that which he ought to think.

NEITHER are the renewed out of danger from this quarter. Sanctification being imperfect, diſtinguiſhed gifts, or uſefulneſs, or uncommon divine communications, are liable to be abuſed and made to foſter pride and raiſe in the worm too high an opinion of himſelf. St. Paul, "though not a whit behind the very chiefeſt apoſtles," needed ſomething to keep him humble and prevent him from being elated by the revelations which were made to him. And he left theſe things on record as a warning to others; and particularly noted them to the church at Corinth, which abounded with miraculous gifts, and among whom they were exceedingly abuſed. He declared them not only inferior to charity, or holy love, but, conſidered in themſelves, as of no eſtimation in a moral view; that a perſon might poſſeſs them in the higheſt degree, and yet be nothing in religion—"Though I ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains,

and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."* The apostle here supposeth a person possessed of the most eminent miraculous gifts, yet wholly destitute of religion. Could no such case happen, he would not have made the supposition. He did not write to amuse, but to edify and instruct.

SOME at Corinth prided themselves in their gifts and despised others—perhaps men's moral state was estimated by them. Therefore did he show the use of those gifts—that they were distinct from renewing grace—that the latter was more excellent than the former; and that the possession of the latter could not be argued from the exercise of the former.

THOSE gifts were very useful at that day, and in that city, which was filled with idolatry, and almost the headquarters of paganism; but to the possessor they were of less value than Christian graces—"Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way"—Namely, the charity described in the following chapter, of which we have been treating above.

To prevent the seventy from indulging the spirit which the apostle afterwards thus reproved at Corinth, was the design of the caution given them in the text. Christ observed how they valued themselves on their gifts and checked the spirit in

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c.

its beginning. *Rejoice not that the ſpirits are ſubject unto you.*

II. WE are to conſider the command—*But rather rejoice becauſe your names are written in heaven.*

THE names of the ſaints are here repreſented as *written in Heaven.* This language is figurative, accommodated to human weakneſs. God hath promiſed ſalvation to the faithful and cauſed them to hope in his mercy; but memorandums are not neceſſaryto remind him of his promiſes, or records in heaven to entitle the faithful to the heavenly inheritance. God's counſels are always before him. The phraſeology of the text is borrowed from the cuſtoms of men, who need memorandums and records to ſecure the fulfilment of engagements.

WHEN men are made free of a city, or ſtate, they are enrolled in the archives of the community—Thence probably, the metaphorical language of the text, and ſimilar ſcriptures: For we often find matters which are determined in the divine councils repreſented as written in celeſtial records—"Then they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and *a book of remembrance was written before him,* for them that thought on "his name." Zion is ſaid to be "graven on the palms of his hands"—The ſaints to be *written* "in the book of life—The dead to be judged out of the things *written* in the books" which will be opened at the grand aſſize, when the world will be judged in righteouſneſs.

As the rewards of grace are made sure to the righteous, the address to the seventy speaks their knowledge of it—*Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.* They could not rejoice in an unknown good. But the manner in which their privileged state is mentioned supposes them acquainted with it. Christ did not here reveal it—did not say, *your names are written in heaven, therefore rejoice,* but rejoice *because* they are written there—because you know it to be the case.

NEITHER do they appear to have possessed knowledge, in this respect, which others are denied. Others are also exhorted to rejoice in the Lord. The suffering Christians of that age were often reminded of the rewards in reserve for them, as what would abundantly compensate all their sufferings here; which supposed them acquainted with their title to glory.

BUT how did they attain this knowledge? And how may others attain it?

BY considering the conditions of the promises and seeing that they have complied with them. The promises are made to faith and repentance, to love and obedience. Where these are found on a person, that person may know that *his name is written in heaven.*

OBEDIENCE flows from faith and love. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." The fruits of grace, are the evidences of grace, and the only evidences on which there is dependence. Should an angel from heaven testify to a person that his name was written there, the

evidence would be inferior to that which ariſeth from the Chriſtian temper evidenced by fruits of holineſs. If theſe were found, that would be uſeleſs; if wanting, inſufficient. "By their fruits ye ſhall know them. In this the children of God are manifeſt." Had a perſon ſuch teſtimony from heaven, he could know that the bearer was from above, only by attending to his own heart and life.

"SATAN can transform himſelf into an angel of light." Permitted of God he might have acceſs to our minds and perſuade us that *our names were written in heaven*, while we remained enemies to God and under the condemning ſentence of his law, had we no rule by which to try ourſelves and judge of our ſtate; but this is not denied us. Yet ſome are probably deceived, through infernal influence, and filled with vain hopes. Miſtaking the ſophiſtry of Satan, for the operation of the divine Spirit, they boaſt communion with God and call themſelves his children while no portion of the Chriſtian temper is found upon them. Doubtleſs ſome who have gloried in ſpecial divine communications have been deceived, relative to the nature and ſource of the operations which they have experienced. Suppoſed viſions and revelations, are often no other than illuſions of fancy, freaks of imagination, or effects of diabolical influence. Thoſe affected with them often appear confident of that which ſober reaſon rejects as groundleſs.

If when we turn the eye inward, we diſcover faith in Chriſt, ſorrow for ſin, love to God, devot-

ednefs to his fervice, and reliance on his grace through a Mediator, and thefe are evidenced by fruits of holinefs, we need no other evidence that *our names are written in heaven:* But if thefe are wanting, hope is vain and confidence delufive—Gifts, the moft extraordinary, even thofe of prophecy and miracles are totally unavailing. They leave us but as "founding brafs and tinkling cymbals."

INSTANCES of this kind have formerly occurred: They may occur again. It concerns us therefore to look to ourfelves, and fee that our hopes are not built on the fand.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE fubjection of evil fpirits to Chrift fhows the univerfality of his dominion: For even apoftate fpirits have not, in every refpect, broken from under his government. He fets them their bounds which they cannot pafs. "Hitherto fhalt thou come and no farther." When diflodged from a man by his order, they could not enter a fwine without his permiffion. They are permitted indeed to indulge depravity, but no farther than infinite wifdom fees fit; and oftentimes their malice is made fubfervient to the divine purpofes. While Chrift had his refidence on earth, they were permitted to poffefs the bodies of men, and his fuperior power was manifefted in their ejection, and thereby a new fpecies of evidence was given to his truth of the gofpel—yea they were fometimes made to confefs him, when men denied him! "I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.*"

* Luke iv. 34.

IN various ways God hath made uſe of apoſtate ſpirits to effect his holy and merciful deſigns. They have been uſed to try the faith, and thereby fit them for glory and honor—Witneſs the ſtrange trials brought on Job! And all ſerved to reſtrain pride and depravity, and by the trial of his faith and exerciſe of his graces, to prepare him for a brighter crown. They may alſo be made inſtrumental in bringing ſinners to repentance. St. Paul ſpeaks of "delivering one to Satan for the deſtruction of the fleſh, that the ſpirit might be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus: And of delivering men to Satan, that they might learn not to blaſpheme."*

II. OUR ſubject teacheth us not to value ourſelves on account of gifts, or powers. Gifts and grace, we have ſeen to be diſtinct—that the former are a kind of common ſtock, deſigned not ſo much for the benefit of the poſſeſſor, as of the public; and that a perſon may poſſeſs them in large meaſure, and yet continue a rebel againſt God and periſh in his rebellion.

GOD hath wiſe reaſons for the beſtowment of gifts, and, in ſome way, gets glory to himſelf thereby. But every talent is liable to abuſe. If any man abuſe them God will require it. Juſtice may be glorified, where goodneſs is neglected, and grace deſpiſed.

THERE is power with God to compel ſuch uſe of his gifts as he requires. By overruling the degeneracy of fallen creatures, they often ſubſerve

* 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20.

the more mischievous. Gifts, under the influence his holy purposes. Princes who know him not, are often instrumental in executing his designs.—the Assyrian and Persian monarchs were formerly made to execute his judicial designs on other nations and on his people, though "they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so." Other potentates do the same, and in the same way. Yea God hath power to compel unwilling obedience to his known commands, and hath sometimes done it. Balaam was made to bless Israel and foretel their greatness, while yet the enemy of Israel, and of the God of Israel; and Jonah, to bear God's messages to Nineveh.

To be thus used of God gives no title to his favor. "When God had performed his whole work on Mount Zion," he punished the proud Assyrian whom he had used in the execution of his justice: And Balaam perished among the enemies of Israel. Service undesignedly performed, and that which is the effect of constraint, find no encouragement in revelation. "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation is committed unto me; what is my reward then?"

III. THOUGH it is lawful to "covet earnestly the best gifts, there is a more "excellent way"—there is that which is more valuable, especially to the possessor—the grace which sanctifies the heart. If we have this grace the more gifts we possess the better—they are all consecrated to the service of God. If we have only gifts they may render us

of grace, are beneficial, but under that of depravity, baleful in their effects.

Some pride themſelves in the powers which they poſſeſs, and deſpiſe thoſe of inferior abilities—ſome miſtake gifts for graces, or the ſure evidences of them. But the day is at hand which will correct miſtakes, and exhibit every thing in its proper light. Then the humble followers of the Lamb, who paſs through life unnoticed, or unknown, will be found *written in heaven*, and will be owned and honored, as the redeemed of the Lord. But thoſe who neglect the grace offered in Chriſt, though they may poſſeſs the greateſt powers—may ſpeak with tongues of men and angels, and have all faith to the removing of mountains, will be denied of the eternal Judge, and ſent away into everlaſting puniſhment. Wherefore, *rejoice not, though the ſpirits may be ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice becauſe your names are written in heaven.*

SERMON XV.

Human Characters determined only by Divine decision.

1 CORINTHIANS iv. 3, 4.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

CORINTH was one of the principal cities of Greece. Enjoying every advantage of situation, it became rich and populous. Most cities in similar circumstances have become vicious. This became exceedingly so.

THE religion of Corinth was paganism, which naturally led to sundry vices. Bacchus and Venus had there their temples and their votaries; and luxury, the child of affluence, led to vice generally. From such a combination of circumstances, the inhabitants, like the men of Sodom, "were sinners before the Lord exceedingly." It might be justly stiled, like Pergamos, "the place where Satan's seat was."

YET God had much people in that city, which was revealed to the apoſtle, as an inducement to continue and labor in it, which he did for more than eighteen months. Nor did he labor in vain. He gathered there a large and flouriſhing church; which appears to have been enriched with a greater effuſion of miraculous gifts, than any other of the primitive churches. The ſtate of Corinth, where God had been unknown, and where ſuperſtition had reigned, might render this neceſſary in order to give ſucceſs to the goſpel. Miracles are adapted to arreſt the attention of thoſe who would be deaf to the voice of reaſon and regardleſs of proofs drawn from it.

BUT thoſe gifts were abuſed. They were made the occaſion of pride, and of diviſions: Which ſhews that there is nothing in the nature of miraculous gifts, which ſecures the proper uſe of them; that they are no evidence of renovation.

THOUGH the apoſtle labored to great and happy effect in that city of the Gentiles, after his departure, deceitful workers went among them, and availed themſelves of his abſence to make diviſions, and alienate their affections from him. This ſeems to have occaſioned his writing the epiſtles addreſſed to them, which conſtitute a valuable part of the ſacred volume.

THE calumnies of his enemies, and the effect which they had on the Corinthians, are alluded to in the text; which contains an expreſſion of his feelings on the occaſion.

In diſcuſſing the ſubject, *we ſhall juſt glance at theſe matters, and add a brief improvement.*

ST. PAUL'S character, both as a Miniſter and as a Chriſtian, was impeached by thoſe enemies.—They repreſented him as an unfaithful, or unſkilful laborer in the goſpel, and as one who was not a ſubject of divine grace.

THIS appears from his ſtatement in the beginning of the context, and from the text. "Let a man ſo account of us as of the miniſters of Chriſt, and ſtewards of the myſteries of God. Moreover it is required in ſtewards that a man be found faithful. "*But with me it is a very ſmall thing, that I ſhould be judged of you, or of man's judgment, yea, I judge not mine own ſelf. For I know nothing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified: But he that judgeth me is the Lord.*"

THE apoſtle here profeſſeth himſelf "a miniſter of Chriſt and ſteward of the myſteries of God," and directs the Corinthians to conſider him in that light; or as one put in truſt with the goſpel, to teach its myſteries, inculcate its truths, urge its duties, and tender its ſupports.

THE term *myſtery* is uſed in Scripture, to expreſs things not diſcoverable by the light of reaſon, but knowable by revelation. It is alſo uſed to expreſs incomprehenſibles; which may be objects of faith on the credit of divine truth. The former is the more common ſenſe of the term in the goſpel, particularly in the paſſage before us, and generally in St. Paul's epiſtles. "We ſpeak the wiſdom of God in a *myſtery*—the hidden wiſdom, which

God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.*"

THE gospel plan of salvation was a *mystery*, a hidden *mystery*, till the gospel day. It was hidden from the prophets who foretold it; and from the apostles, till after Christ's sufferings and resurrection. They understood very little of it; knew almost nothing about it till after the ascension, when the comforter was sent down "to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance." To them it was then matter of wonder. They had not been made to understand that Christ was to bear the sins of men—"that he was to suffer and enter into his glory:" And when he did suffer, "they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."

ANOTHER gospel *mystery* was the calling of the Gentiles—that salvation was intended for them, and to be offered to them, in Christ, equally as to the natural seed of Jacob. "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward; how that by revelation he made known unto me *the mystery*—which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: *That the Gentiles should be*

fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the Gospel, whereof I am made a minister.*

THESE were some of the mysteries dispensed by this steward of the mysteries of God; who "shunned not to declare all the counsel of God." He declared the deep things, which human reason could not have discovered; and those also which it cannot comprehend. These are to be found in Paul's teachings, as well as the plain things which are easy to be understood.

BUT the principal business of this "steward of the mysteries of God," was to open the way of salvation through a Savior, and shew that provision is made in him for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, and offered alike to those of every nation; and to lead men to the knowledge of themselves and the Redeemer, and teach them how they might be benefitted by divine grace in him.

AND while he acknowledged the obligations of fidelity, he declared himself no way greatly affected by the judgment which might be passed upon him by his fellow mortals. *But with me it is a small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment.* An intimation that he was judged and censured by some of them. This was, doubtless, matter of notoriety at Corinth; but he little regarded it. It made no change in him, or in the manner in which he discharged the duties of his office. He was chiefly concerned, to obtain the approbation of an higher tribunal that of his di-

* Ephesians iii. 2—7.

vine master, the Judge of all. The judgment of fellow mortals did not move him—*He that judgeth me is the Lord.*

NOT that he was wholly indifferent to the opinion entertained of him by his fellow men. Had he been so, he would not have undertaken his own defence as in these epistles. A measure of esteem was necessary to his usefulness in the ministry. Had all who heard him thought him the enemy of God, he could have done no good in it. Therefore his endeavor to rectify their mistakes. And the rather because he held the truth as it is in Jesus; so that in rejecting him, and the doctrines which he taught, they turned aside into errors which might fatally mislead them. But he did not wrong his conscience to please them, or depart from truth to gain their approbation—"Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Had Paul been chiefly concerned to please men, he would have continued a Pharisee.

THE person who would please Christ, while paying such deference to the opinions of men as fairly to weigh every objection against his faith or practice, and try them by the divine rule, must be careful to conform to that rule, whatever opinions may be entertained of him. Of the meaning of the rule he must judge for himself before God—"calling no man master." The reasons of his faith and practice, and his construction of the divine rule, he may lay before his fellow men, to remove the grounds of prejudice; but he must

riſe ſo far above their frowns and flatteries, as not to be influenced by them to diſguiſe his ſentiments, or counteract his own judgment of the law of God, of the goſpel of Chriſt, or of the duties incumbent on him.

IT is not by human judgments that we are to ſtand or fall. It is happy that this is the caſe; that the good man hath a judge more juſt and candid than his fellow ſervants; one who knows and pities his weakneſs, though he hath none of his own: "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man."

BUT the apoſtle did not ſtop with a declaration that the judgment of others did not move him; he brought it home to himſelf: *Yea, I judge not mine own ſelf. For I know nothing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.* St. Paul had a witneſs in himſelf that he was ſincere and upright before God—"Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity, and Godly ſincerity, not by fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world, and more abundantly toward you."

THE ſame is the import of his declaration in the text—"*I know nothing by myſelf*—am conſcious of no allowed wickedneſs—of no wilful error, either in profeſſion or practice." But he dared not to aſſert that he had made no miſtakes—*yet am I not hereby juſtified.* He knew himſelf liable to error—did not "truſt his own heart." *He that judgeth me*

is the Lord—" his judgment is according to truth —that will determine my character, and fix my doom."

THE apostle could remember a time in which he had conscientiously done wrong. He had persecuted the church; killed Christ's disciples, and thought he was doing right; verily believed that he was doing God service!—Now he acted conscientiously in " preaching the faith he had once destroyed"—in the manner of his preaching it; and discharging every ministerial and Christian duty; though he was censured and calumniated by some, and suspected by others. He followed the light of his own mind, and determined to follow it; so to act as not to be condemned of himself. But he knew that the standard of rectitude did not follow his views, and vary with his judgment. "If his heart did not condemn him, he had confidence toward God; yet he knew God to be greater than his heart," and possessed of all knowledge; dared not therefore affirm that his judge would approve of all which he approved—*Yet am I not hereby justified—he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

IMPROVEMENT.

I. WE see that censure may be incurred without neglect of duty, When Paul was converted to Christianity, he was made an apostle, and ordered of the Redeemer to preach the gospel. He obeyed. He was guided in his work by the spirit of God; yet he was blamed by some, and suspected by others.

THAT Chriſt's faithful ſervants are ſlandered and reproached is not a new thing under the ſun. It hath been common among men. And herein they are only made like their Lord. And ſhall they think it ſtrange? "It is enough for the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and the ſervant as his Lord. If they call the maſter of the houſe Beelzebub, how much more them of his houſehold?"

WHEN oppoſition and reproaches come from thoſe who profeſs friendſhip to Chriſt they wound the deeper. This however, hath often happened. It happened to the apoſtle at Corinth, and elſewhere. If we witneſs that which is ſimilar, we need not be ſurprized, as though ſome ſtrange thing had happened.

II. ARE we unjuſtly cenſured by our fellow ſervants, or reproached while in the way of our duty? We have here an example worthy our imitation. St. Paul was chiefly concerned to approve himſelf to God. We ſhould be ſo too—ſhould ſtudy to acquaint ourſelves with the divine rule, and to conform to it; not diſobeying God to pleaſe men.

GREAT care is requiſite to know our duty. Enveloped in darkneſs, and biaſſed to error, it is often difficult to find out the right way. But we are not left without inſtruction. A rule is given us by which we may "judge of ourſelves what is right." Of that rule we muſt judge for ourſelves, and by it try ourſelves. "To our own maſter we ſtand or fall." To obtain his approbation ſhould be our chief concern. "If God be with us, who can be againſt us?"

III. KNOWING ourselves fallible, it becomes us to maintain a jealousy over ourselves, and be constantly on our guard. We should consider, that though we do not sin wilfully, and our own hearts do not condemn us, *yet, we are not hereby justified.* We are conscious that we have often erred, and made wrong conclusions, when we did not design to leave the right way. We are liable to do the same again. Our eye should therefore be to God for direction and guidance—"That which I know not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

THIS is the more necessary, because "the light which is in us may have become darkness." For there are those who "put darkness for light and light for darkness." Those with whom this is the case know it not; they flatter themselves and cry peace. "To the pure, all things are pure; but to them that aredefiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." This often happens to those who for a time yield to temptation and go into the ways of sin; they contract false principles, and judge by them, and probably sometimes live and die under the deceptive influence of their darkening power. None would dare to plead before the bar of Christ, that they were his disciples, "and had eat and drank in his presence," had they not been deceived into false views of duty, and mistaken apprehensions of the conditions of acceptance with him.

JUDGING well of ourſelves doth not enſure juſtification at the bar of heaven. Our judgments of ourſelves may be erroneous. If they are ſo, they will be reverſed. We ſhall "be judged out of the books, according to our works;" not according to our falſe and deceitful views. *I know nothing by myſelf, yet, am I not hereby juſtified. For not he that commendeth himſelf is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

SERMON XVI.

Characters will be disclosed, and Justice awarded.

1 CORINTHIANS iv. 5.

—*Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.*

ST. PAUL having profeſſed himſelf a miniſter of Chriſt, and ſteward of the myſteries of God, acknowledged the obligations of fidelity, and diſclaimed anxious concern reſpecting the opinion entertained of him by his fellow men, becauſe the Lord was his judge, here adds a caution, reprehenſive of the cenſorious ſpirit of the Corinthians, who ſeem to have liſtened to his enemies, and given into their ſuſpicions of the apoſtle. Therefore *judge nothing before the time*——

IN the text we obſerve *a caution againſt raſh judging the characters of men—a declaration that they will be known when the Lord comes—and that ſome things commendable will then be found in all*—

then ſhall every man have praiſe of God. We obſerve—

I. A CAUTION *againſt raſh judging the characters of men—judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.*

CIVIL judges may give judgment according to law and evidence, on thoſe brought before them for trial—ſo may the church on thoſe arraigned at her tribunal. Theſe are neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence of civil and eccleſiaſtical communities; therefore ordered of God. It is another ſpecies of judging which is here forbidden; judging the characters of men, eſpecially ſuch as profeſs Godlineſs, and appear to act ſincerely; pretending to determine their moral ſtate, before the motives which actuate them are diſcloſed. This is *judging before the time*, and without evidence on which to ground a judgment; which the wiſe man obſerves to be folly and a ſhame to him who doth it.

THIS had been done at Corinth, by the enemies of the apoſtle; and hath been done by others in every age. There have ever been people who have dared to ſcatter their cenſorious deciſions at random, according to the prevalence of humor, caprice, or prejudice; often to the wounding of the faithful; and rending of the body of Chriſt.

THIS occaſions temporary miſchief; but the day is coming when all theſe diſorders will be rectified. The cenſurer, and the cenſured, will ſtand at the ſame bar, and be tried by the ſame Judge. Every wrong judgment will then be reverſed, and every injurious ſuſpicion be removed. For,

II. EVERY *man's character will be known when the Lord comes—who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts.*

MANY things neceſſary to determine the moral characters of men are hidden from mortal eyes. We are ignorant of *the counſels of the hearts*—do not know their purpoſes and views. Without this knowledge, right judgment cannot be formed.

OUR knowledge of ourſelves is imperfect. For ſelf knowledge we have advantages which we have not for the knowledge of others. We can turn inward, and contemplate the motives which govern, and the views which actuate us. But pride, paſſion, prejudice, or the corrupt bias, operating in ways unperceived, often blinds the mental eye, and renders us ſtrangers at home. "Whoſo truſteth his own heart is a fool.—The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know it?" It requires great attention to form a juſt judgment of ourſelves—yea, to attain that ſelf knowledge which is neceſſary for us. With regard to the knowledge of others, the difficulty is ſtill greater. We can neither ſee the heart, nor know the thoughts and deſigns.

WE are often at a loſs for the motives which occaſion things which fall under our obſervation. Other things which might caſt light upon them, are hidden from us. But when the Lord cometh, the veil ſpread over ſecret matters will be removed. "There is nothing covered, that ſhall not be revealed, or hid that ſhall not be known."

The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

How hearts will be opened to view, we know not. Perhaps when the veil of flesh is removed, minds may possess an intuitive knowledge of each other—be able to look into one another, as while in the body, they look into themselves. Here, this is mercifully prevented; but may be no longer necessary in another state of existence. It may be requisite, to that investigation of characters which we are taught to expect at Christ's coming. For it is the language of the text, and other Scriptures, that every impediment to the complete knowledge of each other, will then be done away; that no person's character will longer remain problematical. *The hidden works of darkness will be brought to light, and the counsels of the hearts made manifest.*

ASTONISHING scenes of wickedness will then, no doubt, be disclosed. Probably each one will discover things in himself which he had not suspected—depravity, unfairness, disingenuity, the bare suspicion of which by others, would be resented as affrontive.

WHEN the prophet forewarned Hazael of the cruelties which he would exercise when he should be king of Syria, his nature seemed to revolt—he could not suspect himself capable of such enormities. "But what! is thy servant a dog?" But all was verified when he had ascended the throne!

BUT though a world of hidden iniquity will appear when *the counsels of the hearts shall be made*

manifeſt. Good things will alſo be opened to view which had till that day been concealed—yea,

III. SOME *things commendable will be found in all. Then ſhall every man have praiſe of God.*

ALL are ſinners. "There is none good but one, that is God." Some "are ſinners exceedingly." Some will continue ſuch till they ſhall have time no longer—die as they have lived, and be ſentenced to "have their part in the lake of fire—which is the ſecond death."

BUT though numbers of this deſcription will be found when the Lord comes, it is preſumed that there will be none among them in whom there will be nothing commendable—who will never have done a praiſe worthy action.

WHEN "*every* work is brought into judgment and *every* ſecret thing, whether it be good or evil," every thing commendable which hath been done by the wicked, will come into the reckoning. Nothing will be overlooked, becauſe done by ſinners. The prejudices inherent in mankind often render them blind to what is commendable in an enemy, and cauſe them to magnify his failings; but not ſo the Deity. God is perfect. "The way of man will he render unto him," whatever may be his general character.

THE ſaints are not equal in virtue and the attainments of grace. Therefore the differences which will be made among them. When they ſhall ſtand before the Judge, their whole probation, with all its circumſtances, will be reviewed, and every praiſe worthy purpoſe, deſire and ac-

tion, will be conſidered and rewarded. On the other hand, every neglect of duty and every deviation from it, will come into the account and make deduction from the weight of glory reſerved for them.

AND among the enemies of God, ſome will be found greater ſinners than others—to have ſinned longer—againſt greater lights, and to have been guilty of more and greater crimes. To ſuch will be reſerved the greater weight of woe. In order to theſe diſcriminations their whole probation will be conſidered. And in thoſe on whom ſentence of condemnation will paſs, the righteous judge will take due notice of every pauſe which they ſhall have made in the ways of ſin—of every inſtance in which they may have denied themſelves, out of regard to the divine authority, though it may have been out of fear of God's judgments, and of every act of kindneſs done by them, to a fellow creature. Every thing of this nature, will be conſidered, and make ſome deduction from the puniſhment which would otherwiſe have been inflicted on them. The judge will paſs nothing of this kind unnoticed, condemning the ſinner to the ſame degree of ſuffering, as though it had not been found upon him. A cup of cold water given to a diſciple of Chriſt, will not loſe its reward.*

"HEROD feared John, knowing that he was a juſt man and an holy, and obſerved him; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly." Herod's puniſhment will not be, in

* Matthew x. 42.

every reſpect, the ſame, as though he had paid no attention to John's teaching. He will not be puniſhed for refuſing to hear John, when he did hear him, or for refuſing to do, what he did do, in compliance with his counſel: Though he will be condemned as, eventually the murderer of that holy man. His partial obedience might be extorted by fear; but this is preferable to diſobedience; otherwiſe fear would not be urged as a motive to obedience. "Fear him who is able to deſtroy ſoul and body in hell." If preferable to diſobedience, a difference will be made between thoſe who obey from no higher principle, and thoſe who diſobey.

HERE God certainly makes a difference between them. When Rehoboam humbled himſelf in the time of his affliction, "the wrath of the Lord turned from him that he would not deſtroy him: And alſo in Judah things went well." But his repentance was not unto life. The character given him at his death is that of a wicked man.

WHEN Ahab, affrighted by the preaching of Elijah, as he was going to take poſſeſſion of the vineyard of murdered Naboth, "humbled himſelf and walked ſoftly:" God ſignified his approbation of his legal repentance and partial amendment, in preference to his former courſe; though he afterwards cut him off in his ſins.

THESE are unequivocal evidences that partial obedience, though dictated by the ſervile principle of fear, is preferable, in divine eſtimation, to allowed diſobedience. God makes a difference in his treatment of people here, on this account;

ſuſpends his judgments, and mitigates ſomewhat of their ſeverity, where he ſees this kind of relenting in ſinners. If God doth this here, is there not reaſon to believe that he will do it hereafter: The rules of divine adminiſtration are doubtleſs uniform in time and eternity. Where he gives a comparative preference here, he will do the ſame hereafter.

So we obſerve our Savior noting things commendable in ſome who did not belong to his kingdom. When the young ruler who came to inquire what he ſhould do to inherit eternal life, declared that he had kept the commandments from his youth up, he was viewed with comparative approbation.—"Then Jeſus beholding him, loved him." It is not conceivable that his partial conformity to the divine law had not made him to differ from thoſe who had allowedly diſregarded it—that his character was as bad as theirs—though he ſoon made it evident that the one thing needful was not found upon him.*

SOME ſuppoſe that the unrenewed can do nothing but ſin againſt God *with all their might*—that every purpoſe of their hearts is *neceſſarily* enmity againſt him, and all their volitions and actions determined oppoſition to his law and government: But we conceive that neither Scripture, nor experience juſtify the ſuppoſition—that were ſuch their ſtate, they would be in no degree, the ſubjects of moral government, and would not be addreſſed of God as moral agents.

* Mark x. 17, &c.

WERE mankind wholly given up of God, and his Spirit withdrawn from them, ſuch might become their ſtate; but this is not the caſe. The Holy Spirit ſtrives with them. They are empowered to reſiſt the Spirit, or cheriſh its influences. This is manifeſt from the divine exhortations addreſſed to them, and from their conduct. Sometimes they pauſe in the way to deſtruction—liſten to counſels and warnings—do things which God requires, and deny themſelves gratifications which are in their power, becauſe God hath forbidden and threatened to puniſh them. The perſon is not to be found who hath not a witneſs in himſelf that this is the caſe.

SHOULD we affirm that none, who are in a ſtate of nature, can be influenced by ſenſe of duty to deny themſelves, or attempt obedience to God's law, it might give occaſion to falſe hopes. Thoſe, the general courſe of whoſe lives is oppoſition to God, ſure that they ſometimes deny themſelves, and like Herod, do things enjoined from above, might flatter themſelves that they were children of God, while belonging to another family, and that they ſhould have peace, when there was no peace to them. Yet when *the Lord cometh, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs and make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts, every man ſhall have praiſe of God.*

GOD will overlook nothing commendable which may have been done by the vileſt of the human race, while on probation; and ſome things commendable will be found in the moſt degenerated;

though in many, the good will be found so low as to leave them on the whole, the servants of sin, and consequently to take their portion among the workers of iniquity.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE day is coming which will scatter the darkness of the present state. Here many things confound us. "We see but we understand not." We wonder sometimes at what God orders, and oftener at what he permits. The time approaches in which all these mysteries will be cleared up. We shall perceive wisdom and goodness in all the divine administration. Our wonder at providential regulations will terminate.

Now we often wonder at things done by our fellow men—are unable to discover the motives which actuate them—perhaps frequently mistake them. But this uncertainty will not be perpetual. The veil spread over these things will be removed when *the hidden things of darkness are brought to light and the counsels of the hearts made manifest.* Then every hidden purpose will be laid open, and every secret counsel disclosed.

II. VAIN are the attempts of mankind to conceal their crimes, or disguise their characters. For a time they may hide their nefarious views, and pass themselves for other manner of persons than they are; but it is only a temporary matter; all are hastening to an omniscient tribunal which will open every heart and life to general inspection. Every one will then be made to stand out, as he is to public view! "Some men's sins are open

beforehand, going before to judgment; and ſome men they follow after. Likewiſe alſo the good works of ſome are manifeſt beforehand; and they that are otherwiſe cannot be hid." Hitherto there are ſecret ſins, and miſtaken characters; but ere long there will be neither. "Every man's work ſhall be made manifeſt, for the day ſhall declare it."

WHAT folly then is hypocriſy? Every one would deſpiſe the delinquent, who, while paſſing to trial ſhould impoſe on his fellows with proteſtations of innocence, when he knew the judge acquainted with his guilt, and that he would ſoon diſcloſe it, and open it to public view. Such is the part acted by thoſe who endeavor to hide their true characters, while making their way to the bar of God.

III. THESE conſiderations ſpeak comfort to the righteous, and terror to the wicked. The ſincerity of the former will ere long be made manifeſt. All the injurious charges brought againſt them, will appear to be injurious, and they will be cleared of every aſperſion. Their integrity will be diſplayed, and *they will have praiſe of God.* Nothing they ſhall have done or ſuffered, out of regard to God will be forgotten or go unrewarded. Yea, their deſires and purpoſes to honor him here, though ability or opportunity to carry them into effect might not be allowed them, will be proclaimed and rewarded. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love"—"David did well that it was in his heart to build an houſe to God's name"—therefore the divine promiſe "to

build him an houſe and eſtabliſh the throne of his kingdom forever."

BUT the wicked who may have paſſed through life under the ſhades of darkneſs, been miſtaken, perhaps, for the righteous, will riſe at the great day, "to ſhame, and everlaſting contempt." Their ſins will then find them out. For "God's eyes are on the ways of man, and he ſeeth all his goings. There is no darkneſs, nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves." And all are written in God's book, and reſerved to judgment; when he "will give to every one, according to his works. Woe unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him." This will be enough to make miſerable. There needs no more than the withdrawing of mercy, and leaving juſtice to take its courſe. This will be the portion of thoſe who neglect offered ſalvation. But,

IV. SINNERS who have, at all, denied themſelves, out of regard to the divine authority, or done aught which God required, though ever ſo partially, will not looſe the benefit of it. Proportioned to its nature, and the degree of rectitude found in it, it will deduct from the puniſhment which the want of it would have occaſioned. The condemned will ſtand ſpeechleſs before the judge —have no reaſon to offer why judgment ſhould not be executed upon them. By the clear manifeſtation of their guilt, and the impartial juſtice of God, they will be conſtrained to acknowledge the perfect fairneſs and equity, yea, the moral neceſſi-

ty of the ſentence by which the laſt gleam of their hope will be extinguiſhed!

THUS will both the mercies and judgments of God be juſtified of all, when he *ſhall bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts.*

SERMON XVII.

God willing that all Men should be saved.

1 TIMOTHY ii. 4.

Who will have all Men to be saved, ——

IN verſe firſt, the apoſtle directs "prayers and thankſgivings to be made for all men;"—which he declares to "be good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Savior; *who will have all men to be ſaved.*" Had ſalvation been provided for only a part of the human race, prayer and thankſgivings could have been conſiſtently made only for a part. Thoſe for whom no proviſion was made, would be in like ſtate with perſons who have committed the ſin unto death, for whom St. John intimates prayer is not to be offered up. "There is a ſin unto death; I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it." But ſuch is naturally, the ſtate of none of the children of Adam. Divine goodneſs is extended to all, and ſalvation offered to them; therefore is prayer and praiſe to be offered up for all men.

IT is now propoſed, *briefly to conſider the divine goodneſs expreſſed in the text—Who will have all men to be ſaved—then ſome abuſes of the revelation which is made of this goodneſs to mankind.*

I. WE *are to conſider the divine goodneſs here expreſſed—Who will have all men to be ſaved.*

THE ſalvation intended, is that of the ſoul. This comprehends deliverance from merited ſufferings, and the beſtowment of happineſs which is the contraſt of it.

THE proviſion which is made for the comfort and happineſs of mankind in this life, evinces ſtrange goodneſs in God. When we conſider what man was made of God, and what he hath made himſelf, the divine benevolence *here* diſplayed, is wonderful! Strange that man was not deſtroyed, and blotted out from among God's works!

SOME ſuppoſe this to have been our firſt parents idea of the threatening in caſe of diſobedience, and expected by them, when they attempted to hide themſelves from the divine preſence, after their fall.*

HAD man then been deſtroyed, the race would have been extinct. But he was ſpared; ſuffered long to continue and rear a family, from which the myriads of human kind have deſcended. Though exiled Eden, and doomed to labor and ſorrow, he was ſtill at the head of this lower creation, and creatures below him generally ſubſervient to his comfortable ſubſiſtence. The ground was indeed curſed for his ſake and fatiguing culti-

* Geneſis iii. 8.

vation rendered neceſſary ; but ſtill it yielded the neceſſaries, and many of the comforts of life ; though not the ſweets of its primitive ſtate.

THESE effuſions of divine goodneſs were probably the wonder of angels, though ſo little noticed by men, the ungrateful objects of them.

BUT theſe were inconſiderable, compared with the ſtrange proviſion made for their eternal ſalvation.

THAT God bears good will to mankind, notwithſtanding their apoſtaſy, and is deſirous of their ſalvation, is from many conſiderations apparent. It is the ſpirit of the text, and the general language of the ſcriptures, as will be ſhewn in the ſequel.

THAT God is willing that all ſhould be ſaved, appears from the ſufficiency of the proviſion which is made for the ſalvation of ſinners ; the frequent declarations that it is deſigned for all ; the offers which are made indiſcriminately to all ; and the ſuitableneſs of the proviſion to the circumſtances of all.

1. FROM the ſufficiency of the proviſion which is made for the ſalvation of ſinners. This is adequate to the ſalvation of the whole race. Chriſt, being a divine perſon, made an infinite atonement. In him there is a fulneſs of merit. Was the number of ſinners ten times greater than that of our whole race, there would be no need of another Savior, or of Chriſt's dying again for their redemption. In him "dwells the whole fulneſs of the Godhead bodily." The reaſon all are not ſaved,

is not a deficiency of merit in the Redeemer, or any limitation of his ſatisfaction. Sinners "are not ſtraitened in him, but in their own bowels."

2. THAT God is willing all ſhould be ſaved appears from the frequent declarations of ſcripture, that Chriſt died for all—"Who gave himſelf a ranſom *for all*, to be teſtified in due time—We ſee Jeſus who was made a little lower than the angels, that he, by the grace of God, ſhould taſte death *for every man*. The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us; becauſe we thus judge, that if one *died for all*, then were all dead; and that he *died for all*, that they who live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them, and roſe again.

3. THE ſame appears in the offers made *to all*. When after his reſurrection Chriſt ſent forth his apoſtles to effect his gracious purpoſes, both his orders and promiſes were indefinite—"Go ye into all the world and preach the goſpel to *every creature*. He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned."

HAD ſalvation been provided for only a part of mankind, and the Savior been unwilling the reſidue ſhould be ſaved, he would not have given charge to his miniſters to tender ſalvation *to all—to every creature*, and declared that whoever came up to the ſpecified conditions, ſhould be ſaved.

NOTHING falſe or inſincere can be predicated of God our Savior. His words are truth. His offers and propoſals are fair and open. That which appears the moſt obvious meaning of them is their

meaning. And ſurely the offers of ſalvation appear to be made to all who hear the ſound of the goſpel; and they are invited and urged to accept them. They were ſo by Chriſt. "In the laſt day, that great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and cried, ſaying, If any man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink."* And they were ſo by his apoſtles when ſent into all the earth to ſpread the goſpel among the nations, and call them to come to Chriſt for life.

4. THE ſame thing appears from the ſuitableneſs of the proviſion which is made for the ſalvation of ſinners, to the circumſtances of all men.

MAN needed an atonement, and he needed aſſiſtance, and both are provided in Chriſt. Of the former we have ſpoken, and there is no need to add. Man's weakneſs is ſuch that he is unable of himſelf to conquer either ſpiritual enemies without, or his own corruptions within. Through Chriſt needed aid is offered to him; he is invited to the throne of grace, and aſſured that he ſhall not ſeek in vain, but "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek and ye ſhall find—If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that aſk him?" Though mankind have rebelled againſt God, he is more ready to hear their cries, and give his ſpirit to ſanctify and ſave them, than the moſt affectionate earthly parent to ſhew kindneſs to his child.

* John vii. 37.

THE gospel is designed as a remedy for human weakness, equally as for human guilt. It is every way adapted to the circumstances of the creatures to whom it offers salvation. It is a fair tender of pardon and peace, of life and happiness to all who hear its joyful sound; it not only opens these blessings to their view, but brings them within their reach.

5. THE divine benevolence is farther evident from the exercise of forbearance towards ingrates, who neglect and slight offered salvation. God doth not soon enter into judgment with them, but waits with much long suffering; repeats his calls and warnings; urges sinners in various ways, and by various means, to turn and live; inwardly by the strivings of his Spirit, and warnings of conscience; outwardly by his word; his providence, and the voice of those whom he sends to "warn the wicked from their way, and beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God."

THE reason of all these applications to sinful man, is that mentioned by St. Peter—"The Lord —is long suffering to us ward, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance."

II. WE *are to consider some abuses of the revelation of divine goodness which is made to mankind.*

THERE is no gift of God which depravity may not abuse. The belief of the divine perfections, especially of the divine mercy and benignity is often made the occasion of sin. Those whose "hearts are turned away from the Lord, when they hear

the words of the curſe, are wont to bleſs themſelves in their hearts, ſaying, we ſhall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt." When called to repentance, they baniſh fear and lull themſelves into ſecurity, with the revelation of divine grace and mercy which they find in the ſcriptures; making that a favor of death, which was ordained to be unto life—"With the Lord there is mercy; with him there is plenteous redemption; with him is forgiveneſs;" not that he ſhould be feared, but that his fear ſhould be caſt off, and his terror not make men afraid to ſin—"God hath no pleaſure in the death of ſinners—judgment is his ſtrange work—he will not enter into judgment—will not deſtroy the work of his hands." Thus mercy is made to abſorb the other divine attributes, and ſinners emboldened in wickedneſs. By ſuch conſiderations they make themſelves vile without concern. Some become ſo hardened and unfeeling, that the approach of death doth not alarm them. By an habitual courſe of wickedneſs, their conſciences are rendered callous, and they are inſenſible both to fear and ſhame, and continue ſo till death puts a period to probation, and ſeals them up for eternity!

THESE conſequences are not apprehended at the entrance on a vicious courſe. The young ſinner deſigns only to take ſome youthful liberties, and not to ſtray very far away, or long to deviate from the path of duty; but the farther he goes in the wrong way, the ſtronger are his attachments to the

pleaſures of ſin—the leſs his concern—the weaker and more diſtant his purpoſes of amendment. He never finds the more convenient ſeaſon, which he promiſed himſelf at ſetting out in the way of wickedneſs; yea, the farther he proceeds in it, the greater is the difficulty of retracing his ſteps, and turning back from his wanderings. Many who thus turn aſide from the path of truth, probably ſettle into a ſtate of ſecurity, and continue in it, till they have time no longer.

WAS man grateful, divine goodneſs would lead him to repentance; but under the influence of depravity, it hath a different effect—is made the occaſion of more ungodlineſs! What baſeneſs! "Sin becauſe grace abounds! Whoſe damnation is juſt! How can ſuch eſcape? The wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs."

FOR ſins of ignorance, and thoſe into which men were ſurprized by unexpected temptations, ſacrifices were ordered in the law, and pardon, on certain conditions, promiſed: But it was not promiſed preſumptuous ſinners. To them the law ſpake nothing but terror. "The ſoul that doth ought preſumptuouſly—the ſame reproacheth the Lord; and that ſoul ſhall be cut off from his people. Becauſe he hath deſpiſed the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that ſoul ſhall be utterly cut off; his iniquity ſhall be upon him."*

* Numbers xv. 30, 31.

THE perſon who lives in all good conſcience may hope in the divine mercy for the pardon of involuntary errors: But with what face can the wilful offender aſk mercy of God? No plea which is not affrontive can he make before him—"Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord: And ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?"

THAT awful threatening, or prophetic denunciation, "The Lord will not ſpare him; but the anger of the Lord and his jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the curſes written in this book [the law] ſhall lie upon him," regards wilful ſinners, flattering themſelves with expectation of divine favor.*

WHEN St. Paul would magnify the riches of divine grace in the ſalvation of the chief of ſinners, he exemplifies it in himſelf—"Who before was a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious—Howbeit for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting." But he ſubjoins an alarming hint that thoſe who ſin wilfully, have no reaſon to expect like mercy from God. "But I obtained mercy *becauſe* I did it ignorantly in unbelief." That no mercy would have been ſhewn him had he done thoſe things preſumptuouſly, is here intimated with ſufficient plainneſs. This deſerves the attention of thoſe who ſin preſuming on divine mercy. Surely they cannot reaſonably expect

* Deuteronomy xxix. 20.

mercy from him "who is no reſpecter of perſons," if Paul "obtained it *becauſe he did thoſe things ignorantly in unbelief.*" If this is duly conſidered, Will not preſumptuous ſinners believe and tremble? Will they not perceive their hopes to be vain?

2. ANOTHER abuſe of the revelation of divine mercy is the univerſal ſcheme which is built upon it. The text and ſimilar paſſages of ſcripture are alledged as evidence that none can be loſt.

To help the argument, it is ſaid—"To be influenced to obedience by fear is low and mercenary; and God would not urge men to duty by ſo unworthy a principle."

BUT was not fear of puniſhment uſed as a guard to innocence while man remained upright? "In the day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die." Had the influence of fear, operating to duty, been wrong, God would not have urged it as a motive to obedience. "Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." If God uſeth this as an argument to excite to duty, it muſt be a proper argument. That it is thus uſed in all his word, admits no diſpute. Every teacher whom God hath ſent to teach the way of life, and perſuade men to walk in it, hath uſed it. The divine teacher is not to be excepted—"Fear him who is able to deſtroy ſoul and body in hell, yea, I ſay unto you, fear him." And when he delineates the proceſs at the great day, after declaring that the righteous and the wicked will be ſeparated from each other, the whole is cloſed with that

ſolemn declaration—"Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal."

To be influenced by promiſes is no leſs mercenary than being driven by terror. And this is alſo propoſed as an incitement to obedience. "God hath given us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by them we ſhould become partakers of a divine nature."

EVERY inſpired teacher hath called men to repentance in the ſame manner, and urged it by the ſame arguments. Proof is needleſs. To pretend that application is not made, by divine order, to the hopes and fears of mankind, is trifling—Yea to pretend that they are not urged by the dread of eternal puniſhment, is to deny the moſt obvious truth.

AND is there no cauſe for this fear? Doth God frighten men with vain terrors? Doth he threaten evils which can never come?

OR if this argument was neceſſary to be uſed with man before he fell, is it needleſs ſince he hath fallen?

BUT *God our Savior will have all men to be ſaved;* and ſhall not that which he wills be effected? Can any thing contrary to his pleaſure take place?

MUCH doth take place in this world, which, is not pleaſing to God; which he doth not will, or approve. This may be predicated generally of ſin. "Sin is the abominable thing which he hates.—He is angry with the wicked every day." Would

he be angry, if all which is done was pleasing in his sight?

GOD is holy. Sin is opposition to his nature, forbidden by his law, and declared to be his abhorrence. To suppose that he should hate and forbid sin, yet approve of it and be pleased with it, is absurdity and folly.

GOD permits sin; but neither wills nor approves it. "Christ pleased not himself."* Much is permitted under his administration, which he doth not order, but forbids and abhors. Yea, God orders some things, as moral governor (in consequence of other things done contrary to his directions) which are not pleasing to him, considered in themselves. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men"—But finds it necessary to afflict. Grief and sorrow are known under the divine administration, and ordered out to mortals by providential dispensation. But these natural evils are always in consequence of moral evil, which is not the effect of divine influence, but ariseth from another source and hath another author. It ariseth from the abuse of powers which were given for better purposes. Where sin hath gone before, sorrows follow after; but they are not pleasing to the Supreme Governor.

THE wickedness of the old world occasioned the deluge; but it is impossible to read the Mosaic account of those events, and suspect that they were pleasing to Deity.

* Rom. xv. 3.

WE may make the ſame remark reſpecting the declenſions of Iſrael and Judah and the judgments which followed. "O thou ſon of man, ſpeak unto the houſe of Iſrael, Thus ye ſpeak, ſaying, If our tranſgreſſions and our ſins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we then live? Say unto them, as I live ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?"* By another prophet we find God mourning over them—"How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah, and ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

THAT people continued in their ſins and periſhed in them; But will any who read theſe meſſages, ſent them of God, conceive their crimes, and the deſolations which followed, when they had filled up the meaſure of their iniquity, to be pleaſing to God, or the effect of divine order and influence?

WILL thoſe who read our Savior's lamentations over Jeruſalem, and the deſtruction ſoon after brought upon that city and nation, becauſe "they did not know the time of their viſitation," conſider thoſe events as pleaſing to him? His predictions were verified—"their enemies caſt a trench about them, compaſſed them round and kept them in on every ſide—laid their city even with the

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 10.

ground, and her children within her; not leaving one ſtone upon another—Zion was ploughed like a field"—vaſt numbers periſhed in the ſiege—many were crucified after the city was taken—the reſidue ſcattered among all nations, and the ſword drawn out after them! The compaſſionate Redeemer called thoſe ſinners to repentance—warned them of the evils which they would bring on themſelves, by refuſing the grace which he offered them, and wept over them when filling up the meaſure of their guilt! But when they had been tried the appointed time, and continued obſtinate, till the divine patience was exhauſted, he entered into judgment with them and gave them according to their works.

SIMILAR will be the event of perſevering obſtinacy in others. Man is placed here for trial—endowed with powers ſufficient to render him a probationer; which implies capacity to uſe, or abuſe his powers. The abuſe is ſin. The way of duty is made known, needed aſſiſtance conferred, the reaſonableneſs of obedience ſhewn, and the injunction, "occupy till I come," ſubjoined, but no compulſion is uſed. Thus circumſtanced, it is referred to man to chooſe for himſelf.

GOD operates indeed on man; but only as on a free moral agent. Divine influences coincide with human liberty. Thoſe who are willing and obedient find mercy. Over ſuch the Savior rejoices, and their faith and love are rewarded with the rewards of grace. But thoſe who neglect ſo great Salvation, are left to periſh in their ſins.

That God can consistently do other than leave them to perish, is to us unknown. It may be impossible to renew them by repentance—beyond the power of Omnipotence to save them!

THE conditions of salvation are fixed: No change can be made in them. "The impenitent heart treasureth up wrath. He that believeth not shall be damned. If we do not believe, yet God abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." The terms of acceptance with God are laid before us; the event depends on the choice we make.

SUCH we conceive to be man's situation here: Such the ground of the applications made to him in the gospel, and the promises and threatenings annexed to the proposals therein contained. On no other, supposition do they appear rational. On no other can we account for our Savior's declaration that Sodom, had she enjoyed Capernaum's advantages, would have remained till his day.*

DIVINE benevolence is great; but it will not secure salvation to gospel despisers: They "will wonder and perish."

As the first covenant had conditions annexed to it, so hath the new covenant. To pretend that there are none—that man hath no concern to secure the divine favor, is to charge folly on God, in all the overtures which are made to man in the gospel.

LIFE and death are now set before us. We may be saved, or we may perish. Which will be our portion depends on the effect which the proposals

* Matthew xi. 23.

of grace have upon us. "To day if ye will hear God's voice harden not your hearts. Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of ſalvation. Boaſt not thyſelf of to morrow; for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth. Beware leſt you * deſtroy a ſoul for which Chriſt died; and leſt you have occaſion at laſt to take up that lamentation—"The harveſt is paſt, the ſummer is ended and we are not ſaved."

* Romans xiv. 15.

SERMON XVIII.

Balak's inquiries relative to the service of God, and Balaam's answer, briefly considered.

MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?— He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

AS mankind are endowed with reaſon, and profeſs to be governed by it, their revolts from God are practical criminations of him: Therefore his expoſtulations with his people of old, when they forſook him and followed other gods—"What iniquity have your fathers found in me? O my people what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtify againſt me."*

* Jeremiah ii. 5. Micah vi. 3.

ISRAEL as a people were going away from God, and he condescended to reason with them, and shew them their ingratitude and baseness. To this end, he reminded them of his past care of them and kindness to them, as a nation, from the time of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt—"I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee from the house of servants"—After just glancing at that deliverance, he passes over the wonders wrought for them at the red sea, and in the wilderness, and their numerous rebellions, while he was leading them as a flock, and supplying their wants by a series of miracles, and enlarges on an event which took place on the borders of Canaan, the attempts made by Balak, the king of Moab, to prevail with him to leave his people and go over to him, and help him against them, and his faithfulness to Israel on that occasion—"O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."*

BALAK's consultations, or inquiries, are contained in the two last verses of our text: Balaam's answer in the third. In Balak's inquiries we see the ideas which he entertained of God, and of the service which he supposed would be acceptable to him, and engage him to forsake his people, and deliver him from his fears on their account. Balaam's answer corrects Balak's mistakes, and discovers surprizingly just apprehensions of the true

* Numbers xxii. &c.

God, and true religion, though depravity prevailed, and caused him to counteract his convictions, by advising Balak to measures directly opposed to his sense of duty.

To open and explain this subject is the design of the following discourse.

IT may be proper to premise that Israel did not make war either on Moab or Ammon. Those nations were descended from Lot, and Moses was forbidden to molest them in possession of the lands which God had given them. Moab might have had peace, and the friendship of Israel, but refused it, and joined the confederacy against them. When the tribes of Israel reached the borders of Moab, which lay in their way to Canaan, Balak and his people were intimidated by their numbers, and by their martial appearance. They did not therefore, sue for peace, but resolved to neglect no measures to subdue and conquer them.

IT was an ancient custom among the heathen, at their entrance on a war, to devote the enemy to destruction, and solicit their gods to forsake them. Balak thought this a matter of importance before he entered into a war with Israel. This ceremony was commonly performed by the priests, or ministers of religion. How this had been in Moab we are not informed; but on occasion before us, the affrighted sovereign of that people, sent to some distance for Balaam, a famous soothsayer, or diviner, of whose prevalence with the powers above he had a high opinion, to be the agent in this business.

BALAAM was really a remarkable perſon; few more ſo occur in hiſtory. Few others had more knowledge of the true God, or juſter ideas of the ſervice which he requires of mankind. But his character will be developed in the ſequel.

THIS renowned ſoothſayer refuſed at firſt to liſten to the invitation of the king of Moab, aſſigning a ſufficient reaſon for his refuſal—"The Lord refuſeth to give me leave"—but when a ſecond embaſſy arrived, more numerous and more honorable, and with the proffer of great honors and rewards, his ambition and covetouſneſs were inflamed, and he reſolved from that moment to ſecure them. The firſt ſeems to have been only a common embaſſy, and to have carried only the uſual rewards of divination. We know what followed. Balaam ſinned in aſking a ſecond time for liberty to go and curſe Iſrael, when God had once refuſed him, and told him that they were bleſſed. He aſked, however, and was in judgment permitted to go, but only to act agreeably to divine direction which ſhould be given on the ſpot; but he went, determined to ſecure the wages of unrighteouſneſs. Seeing his deſign, God met him in the way, and by a ſtrange and miraculous communication and warning, made him afraid to curſe his people, and even compelled him to bleſs them altogether. But to come to our ſubject,

I. WE are to conſider Balak's inquiries.—*Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord?*

BALAK had ſo deep a ſenſe of the danger which threatened him, that he was ready to bring the moſt

coſtly ſacrifices, if they would avail to render propitious the God who had wrought ſuch wonders in Egypt, and in the wilderneſs for the ſalvation of his people. He would offer all the cattle, and all the oil of his kingdom, *thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil!* Yea, he would even offer his *firſt born*, the heir of his crown! Would not refuſe the deareſt of his offspring to atone for his ſin, and bring over the God of Iſrael to be his God, in the time of his diſtreſs!

SUCH were his propoſals. We may obſerve in them ſeveral miſtakes reſpecting the ſervice of God, or the homage which is acceptable to him; miſtakes not uncommon among men. As,

FIRST, a ſuppoſition that ſins may be atoned and mankind allowed to continue in them, if they will come up to the price.

THE country of Moab abounded with flocks, particularly with ſheep;* it abounded alſo with oil; and Balak ſuppoſed that the divine favor might be obtained by ſacrifices of this kind—by a profuſion of them—*thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil.* He knew himſelf a ſinner—he knew that he had taken part againſt the God of Iſrael; had ſerved other gods, who were his rivals. But now he ſaw his need of the divine favor, and he wiſhed to purchaſe it—at any price, to purchaſe it. He was ready to pay for his ſins; only waited to know the price, and he would make the payment!

* 2 Kings iii. 4.

NOT a word do we hear of his parting with his ſins and returning back by repentance.

FEW left to the light of nature ſeem to have conceived the neceſſity of repentance, in order to obtain the divine favor. For their ſins, they muſt ſome how, make atonement, and they would then be forgiven, though they continued to commit them! Mankind have entertained different ideas of what was neceſſary to make atonement. The more common idea hath been, that it was to be done by ſacrifice; however they came by that idea. It probably derived by tradition from the firſt family of our race. But there ſeems to have been a general miſtake reſpecting the deſign of ſacrifice. By thoſe devoid of revelation, it hath not been conſidered as pointing to a divine ſacrifice, but as having *in itſelf* an atoning virtue. So it ſeems to have been viewed by this Moabitiſh prince.

ANOTHER miſtake reſpecting ſacrifices, which hath been common in the world, is this—That their value depends on their coſt to the offerer. This was a miſtake of Balak. If common offerings, and the uſual number of victims would not procure the divine favor and atone for his ſins, he would offer more, and more coſtly ones—*thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil!* Such a profuſion of ſacrifices, of the ſame kind, or partly ſo, with thoſe offered by Iſrael, ſo many more they were able, coming out of the wilderneſs, to offer, he hoped would prevail to detach from them their God, and buy him ſo to be his friend!

BUT if not, if these were too little, he would sacrifice his offspring! *Give his first born for his transgression—the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul!* A sacrifice much more costly, much more painful, than that of all earthly treasure! Surely such an offering must prevail!

SIMILAR conclusions have not been very uncommon! The homage offered up to God hath been estimated by its cost to the offerer! A circumstance which adds nothing to its value. The value of what is done for God depends on its conformity to his orders. That its cost to the offerer enhances its value, in the divine estimation, supposes him to be pleased with the sufferings of his creatures, and delighted with their sorrows, than which, nothing is farther from truth. "God grieveth not willingly—Judgment is his strange work." Were it otherwise, the more reluctant the offerer, the more acceptable would be the offering: But God loves a cheerful giver; yea, he is so pleased with this disposition, that he accepts and rewards it, where ability is wanting to carry it into action. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted."*

THE sacrifices of old derived all their value from the sacrifice of Christ, to which they pointed. God had determined, when and how they should be offered. Additions to the number, or cost, added nothing to their value, but had a contrary effect, spoiled and rendered them unavailing. Human victims, the most costly, and therefore supposed by the heathen, to be the most efficacious, were so far

* 2 Corinthians viii. 12.

from having power with God to draw down his bleſſing, that they moſt certainly drew his curſe on all who offered them. This was one of the ſins of the Canaanites, which above all others, availed to bring the divine judgments upon them. And when Iſrael fell into the ſame ſin, it kindled the wrath of God againſt them to their deſtruction. This was the ſin of Manaſſeh, "which God would not pardon."

BALAK firſt propoſed other ſacrifices—a profuſion of them; but if they were not ſufficient to atone for his ſins and procure the friendſhip of Jehovah, ſeems to have thought that the ſacrifice of his firſt born muſt avail!

SUCH were his blunders reſpecting the nature of that religion which would render him acceptable to the true God. He ſeems not once to have thought of repentance; or if he did, he made no offer of it—did not once propoſe "crucifying the fleſh with its affections and luſts." He choſe rather to ſacrifice all the treaſures of his kingdom, and all the members of his family, than part with his ſins and become holy in heart and life.

SUCH is the temper of depravity. The ſervants of ſin are ſooner perſuaded to make any other ſacrifice than that of their luſts and corruptions. And many fooliſhly flatter themſelves that other ſacrifices will avail to procure the divine favor—that holineſs of heart and life are not indiſpenſibly requiſite, but that ſomething beſide may be ſubſtituted in its ſtead. Countleſs examples of this folly meet us in hiſtory, and even in the hiſto-

ry of a church which calls itself Christian! Yea, which claims to be the only catholic church of Christ!

THUS did Balak mistake the nature of true religion, and consider it as consisting in that which was foreign, yea, repugnant to its nature. Such were his proposals which he spread before Balaam, and of which he required his opinion. Let us hear then the answer of the Sage.

BALAAM was better instructed: He appears to have understood the nature of true religion, and clearly points it out to Balak, though he neglected himself to conform to it. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly, with thy God?*

THERE is scarcely a better definition of true religion to be found in the bible.

HE *hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.*—From Balak's inquiry we should be ready to conclude that he was ignorant of God and religion—that he supposed that God preferred sacrifice to justice and mercy—that sacrifice would supply their place and render them of no account. Balaam tells him that he had been better instructed; though we know not where, or how. *He hath shewed thee, what is good;* and he appeals to Balak whether this was not the case—*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, &c.*

To *do justly*—There is no true religion where justice is not received as a foundation principle. "I the Lord love judgment; I hate robbery for

burnt offerings; and I will direct their work in truth."* Fraudulent people may pretend to religion; may make many and long prayers, but their religion is of no avail; their ſacrifices are an abomination.† Witneſs the ſcribes and phariſees, who received the greater damnation.

THE next characteriſtic trait here given of the good man, is the love of mercy. *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly and to love mercy?*

THERE is ſomething particularly to be obſerved in the language here uſed—*love mercy*.—It may not be in every one's power to ſhew mercy; but every man may, and every good man does *love mercy*. To "feed the hungry and clothe the naked," are acts of mercy, but not in the power of all men. Some are, themſelves wholly dependent on the mercy of others for their own ſupport.

JUSTICE often reſtrains and ſets bounds to the exerciſe of mercy. The judge may be grieved for the malefactor, and wiſh that he could ſhew mercy to him, but find himſelf obliged to condemn him and ſuffer juſtice to take its courſe. The debts which a perſon hath contracted may require all his goods, or all his neceſſities do not require. In ſuch caſes he is under obligation to ſhut the hand of charity, even againſt the proper objects of it. We have no right to defraud ſome, that we may ſhew mercy to others. Juſtice is a prior duty. We are tied up to the diſcharge of it—are bound to *do juſtly*; whereas it is only required that we *love mercy*. The love of mercy will diſpoſe us to

* Iſaiah lxi. 8. † Iſaiah i. 10, &c.

ſhew mercy, where we have ability to do it without violating juſtice. Yea, it will cauſe us to do it with pleaſure, rendering us like God, who "delights in mercy."

ACTS of mercy may proceed from other principles beſide the love of mercy, but theſe do not anſwer to the divine requirement. In the view of him who ſees the heart they are not characteriſtic of renovation, or a heart right with God.

THE third particular here mentioned as conſtituting the finiſhing part of the good man's character, is humility—*that he walks humbly with his God*—that he is ſenſible of his imperfection, and of his need of mercy from God. This always makes a part of the good man's character.

THE good man, while he is juſt to all, and while kind and benevolent, and diſpoſed to do good to all, as he hath opportunity and ability, retains a ſenſe of his defects, of his remaining depravity—that he but too often deviates from his own principles—that in every thing he comes ſhort of his duty. Therefore doth he confeſs himſelf "an unprofitable ſervant"—that he lays God under no obligation—yea, that he lives on mercy—that all the good things which he receives, are unmerited, the gifts of divine grace—that was mercy denied him, and "the reward of his hands given to him, it would be ill with him"—he ſhould be undone forever.

SUCH is the character drawn by the Eaſtern ſoothſayer in the laſt verſe of our text: And it is the perfect character of a child of God, in this ſtate of imperfection, trial, and improvement,

where he is preſſing on towards that perfection which he never attains till he "puts off the body, and is clothed on with his houſe which is from heaven." Then "the ſpirits of juſt men are made perfect," and not till then.

"THE ſpirits of juſt men"—The words are expreſſive, plainly implying that none who allow themſelves in injuſtice are the children of God—that all the ſaints will eventually be found, to be "Iſraelites indeed in whom there is no guile."

THUS did Balaam inſtruct Balak, or remind him of what God required. Balak did not regard him. He could not be perſuaded to make ſuch ſacrifices as theſe. He would give all the treaſures of his kingdom, and even the fruit of his body, to procure the favor of God; but to ſacrifice his corruptions, and put on the temper of a ſaint!—Theſe were hard requirements—he muſt be excuſed! Therefore did he diſmiſs his inſtructor, who hitherto had "ſpoken only the word which God had put into his mouth"—and went away though he went ſorrowing!

THE ſame is the temper of too many others. We may do much which God requires, may even go beyond and do much which he doth not require, and yet be nothing in religion. There muſt be the ſpirit and temper of true religion. There can be no commutation—Nothing will be accepted as a ſubſtitute. *We muſt do juſtly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God*, or have no part in him. Nothing without it will be accepted; not even "giving the body to be burned."

PEOPLE may alſo have a good ſpeculative acquaintance with religion and yet remain devoid of it. Such caſes ſometimes occur. Such an one occurred in him who ſpake ſo well in our text. Balaam appears to have had a perfect knowledge of the nature of religion; to have underſtood what it was and wherein it conſiſted. He was ſenſible alſo of the importance of being found at laſt to have lived under the influence of it. Therefore when looking forward to the period of his diſſolution, did he utter that earneſt wiſh, or prayer—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his." Yet he was not a good man! his knowledge reſided in his head: It never reached his heart. "He loved the wages of unrighteouſneſs;" lived and died under the government of depravity and wickedneſs! He dared not indeed to go in direct oppoſition to the letter of the divine command—dared not curſe Iſrael with his lips, though he longed to do it, and wiſhed the curſe to fall upon them, while he was bleſſing them and forerelling their future greatneſs. But he dared privately to adviſe Balak "to caſt a ſtumbling block before them"—To ſend among them the women of Moab, and ſeduce them to uncleanneſs and idolatry, in order to bring the curſe of heaven upon them! His advice was followed and partly ſucceeded! Not to procure a victory for Moab, but to bring the judgments of God upon Iſrael; twenty four thouſands of whom fell by the peſtilence which was ſent to puniſh "their ſin in the matter of Peor." And more tragical events would

probably have followed, had not Phinehas stood up and executed vengeance on some of the principal offenders, and thus turned away the anger of the Lord from his offending people.*

WHO can contemplate these things without astonishment! Who consider the character and conduct of Balaam and not be amazed! That a man so instructed respecting the divine character, the nature of religion, and the consequences which will follow human conduct here, should dare to set himself deliberately to evade the divine law, as wicked and artful men do human laws, surprises and confounds us! Yet so it certainly was in the case before us!

WE are not left ignorant of the consequences: To him the "end of those things was death," eternal death, for he died in rebellion against God. And he seems to have anticipated the event; when speaking of the divine being, the true God and Redeemer, he breaks out into that language—"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh."

WE can form no judgment of a person's moral state by his speculative knowledge of God and religion. Knowledge in divine things is important; on many accounts it is so; but it does not ensure goodness of heart, without which we cannot be saved; we may have "all knowledge," yet perish in our sins. So it happened to Balaam,

* Numbers xxv. and xxxi. 16.

and probably to others beſide him. "If ye know theſe things happy are ye, *if ye do them.*"

BUT we are chiefly concerned at home—to know our own ſtate. *Do we do juſtly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God?* If theſe are found upon us, happy are we; but if any of them are habitually wanting to us, we "are yet in our ſins, and the wrath of God abideth on us."

IF any are diſpoſed to inquire with Balak, *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God?* Let them attend to the anſwer given by Balaam—if we add, reliance on divine grace in Chriſt, no better anſwer can be given.

How far thoſe of old were let into the goſpel way of ſalvation we know not. Balaam expreſſed the temper of a child of God. Whoever poſſeſſed that temper relied on divine mercy, while endeavoring to fulfil all righteouſneſs. Such would refer themſelves to divine grace; and ſurely God would not be wanting to them. He might lead them by a way which they underſtood not; "but would bring them to their deſired haven, and unto God their exceeding joy. Their labor would not be in vain in the Lord."

DEPENDENCE on divine mercy is ſtill our duty. Though favored with goſpel light, many things are yet hidden from us. Let us therefore *do juſtly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God*, and he will guide us through the darkneſs, and bring us to the reſt which he hath prepared for thoſe who love and ſerve, and truſt him here. For theſe

there is no commutation. Knowledge the moſt perfect; faith the moſt miraculous; and ſacrifices the moſt coſtly, would all be of no avail. God hath ſhewn us what is good, and what he requires. May we hear and obey. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

Confessing Christ an indispensable Duty.

2 TIMOTHY ii. 12.

—If we deny him, he also will deny us.

THIS is predicated of Christ; and looks forward to the day when all mankind will stand before him as their judge.

DENYING Christ is here declared to be a mortal sin. Those found guilty of it will hear that sentence—"Depart ye cursed!" But this is to be understood only of a persevering denial of him. Those who turn by a timely repentance, will find mercy. This is true of every sin. But repentance may be too late. It must antecede death, or it will be of no avail. The day of grace terminates with life. From that period man ceases to be a probationer, and his state is unalterably fixed.

WHEN the offers of pardon and peace are sent abroad, some will not hear. Who will receive, and who reject the grace of life, is to us unknown. Our expectations are often disappointed. Some

come to Chriſt, of whom we had little hope; others cannot be perſuaded, of whom our hopes were ſtrong. We have only to "preach Chriſt; warning every man, and teaching every man," and muſt leave the event.

SOME live where the ſound of goſpel grace is not heard. *We* are made to differ from them. "To us is the word of this ſalvation ſent." But this doth not ſecure ſalvation to us. We muſt hear and obey. "If we neglect ſo great ſalvation, we ſhall not eſcape."

AMONG the indiſpenſable requirements of the goſpel, is that of confeſſing Chriſt. Himſelf hath determined it. "Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs before my Father which is in heaven; but whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven."*

WHETHER the apoſtle had this declaration of our Savior's in his eye; or it was revealed to him by the holy Spirit, we are not informed; but his language in the text is expreſs to the ſame purpoſe—*If we deny him, he alſo will deny us.*

THESE declarations have a particular reference to the duty of appearing openly to be Chriſt's diſciples; eſpecially in times of perſecution, when Chriſtian's are expoſed to ſufferings and death for his ſake. Even in ſuch times, confeſſing Chriſt is a condition of being confeſſed by him. If we think this a hard requirement, and refuſe compliance, we ſhall have no part in him.

* Matthew x. 32.

WHAT are we then to underſtand *by confeſſing and denying Chriſt.*

CONSIDERING one of theſe may ſuffice. The text regards the latter. To this we will therefore turn our attention.

CHRIST *may be denied in words ; or in works ; or by a perverſion of the goſpel, cauſing it to become another goſpel.* We will treat of each, briefly.

I. CHRIST may be denied in words.

As " with the mouth confeſſion is made to ſalvation," ſo with the mouth we may " deny the Lord who bought us." This is done by thoſe who deny that Jeſus is the Chriſt. Thus he was denied by the Jews, among whom he was born, and paſſed the days of his earthly reſidence.

THAT people had many peculiar advantages for knowing Chriſt, and many ſpecial evidences of his truth. " To them were committed the oracles of God." They had the prophets who teſtified of Chriſt. To them did he appeal, and by them call on the Jews to try his claims to the Meſſiaſhip—" Search the ſcriptures ; they are they which teſtify of me." That people alſo witneſſed his miracles, " which were ſuch as no man could do except God were with him." They witneſſed the wonders which attended his birth—thoſe which attended, and followed his death—many of that nation, who had ſeen his crucifixion, and the ſoldier's ſpear pierce his heart while he hung on the croſs, ſaw him alive after his paſſion ; and a ſufficient number, moſtly, if not wholly Jews, witneſſed his aſcention. Yet as a people they rejected

him, and continued in unbelief! Not only denied him before Pilate, but notwithſtanding the teaching and miracles of the apoſtles, perſevered in their denial of him, and periſhed in it! This was foretold. Chriſt warned them of the event of their infidelity—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall periſh in your ſins." But they would not hear.

By the Gentiles the goſpel was more kindly received. Though devoid of that knowledge of God and true religion which might have prepared them for the reception of it, when they witneſſed the mighty works, wrought by thoſe who preached it, they believed. Miracles are appeals to the ſenſes of mankind. And when thoſe who had worſhipped dumb idols, beheld the wonders wrought by the miniſters of Chriſt, they perceived that they were ſent of God, and became obedient to the faith. Then did "many come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſet down in the kingdom of God; while the children of the kingdom were caſt out." Chriſtianity ſpread abroad. "The heathen were given to the Son for an inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for a poſſeſſion." For ſeveral ages, moſt who were educated in Chriſtian lands, and bleſſed with revelation, profeſſed to believe the goſpel. But in later ages there hath been a falling away, agreeably to the predictions which went before, and many deny the truth of the goſpel, and reject it as fabulous.

II. CHRIST may be denied in works. He is ſo by ſome who in words confeſs him.

THOSE who enroll themſelves among Chriſt's diſciples, thereby engage to be his followers. This is enjoined and made a term of acceptance. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf and take up his croſs and follow me—whoſoever doth not bear his croſs, and come after me, cannot be my diſciple."

To follow Chriſt is to cultivate his temper, and tread in his ſteps. "Chriſt was meek and lowly in heart." He did God's commandments. It was "his meat to do the will of him that ſent him." Thoſe who are his diſciples have learnt of him. The ſame mind is in them, which is in him. When this divine temper is wrought into the ſoul, it appears in the life. Thoſe who have his ſpirit, walk as he walked.

SOME call themſelves Chriſtians, who do not follow Chriſt. But he doth not acknowledge them to be his. He ranks them among thoſe who deny him. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay? Then are ye my friends, when ye do all things, whatſoever I have commanded you."

CHRIST's name is blaſphemed, when thoſe who call themſelves after him live in allowed wickedneſs. Sore are the wounds which he hath received in the houſe of his friends." No other have been ſo deep and deadly.

BUT thoſe who while they call themſelves Chriſt's friends, live like the wicked world, diſcover their hypocriſy—that they are not of Chriſt's flock—"His flock hear his voice and follow him." Oth-

ers may creep in unawares, but they are not of his fold. The apostle speaks of these false professors in his epistle to Titus.* "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."†

OTHERS deny Christ by refusing to confess him: "For the refusal is in works to deny him."

UNDER the former dispensation certain duties were enjoined as tokens of subjection to the divine Sovereign. To neglect them, was considered as breaking the covenant of God. "And God said to Abram, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou and thy seed after thee. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall be circumcised. The uncircumcised man child shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."‡ An attendance on the passover was enjoined under the same penalty. The person who should neglect it, was ordered to be cut off from Israel. Every rite and ceremony enjoined in the law was obligatory. To neglect them was to set up the standard of rebellion against God—deny his sovereignty—his right to give law. Those who persevered in neglects, after warnings, were no more to be considered as his people.

UNDER the gospel dispensation, duties of like import are enjoined, and under the same penalty. The tokens of belonging to Christ are commanded. To neglect them is to reject the Savior, and for-

* Titus i. 16. † Titus i. 16. ‡ Genesis xvii. 9—14.

feit the benefits of an intereſt in him. Among theſe an open profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, is one of the chief. So it was conſidered by the apoſtles, and primitive Chriſtians. They dared not neglect it when it coſt every worldly comfort, and even life. Neither was it a groundleſs fear which excited them to ſo coſtly a duty. Their Lord, had expreſsly declared, that "whoever ſhould be aſhamed of him, before an evil and adulterous generation, he would be aſhamed of them before his Father, and before his angels."

IF we attend to our context we ſhall ſee that the apoſtle has here a ſpecial reference to denying Chriſt in this way—"Remember that Jeſus Chriſt, of the ſeed of David, was raiſed from the dead, according to my goſpel: Wherein I ſuffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's ſake, that they may obtain ſalvation, which is in Chriſt Jeſus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful ſaying, for if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him: If we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him: *If we deny him, he alſo will deny us:* If we believe not; yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himſelf."

THE apoſtle perſevered though he ſuffered the loſs of all things, and incurred every indignity and ſorrow; and even when he foreſaw the loſs of life, in conſequence of adhering to the Chriſtian cauſe and continuing to preach the goſpel. When ſome who were concerned for him, would have diſſuaded him from adventuring among the enemies of

Chriſtianity, eſpecially as his dangers and ſufferings among them, were foretold by a prophet, he refuſed their counſel and adhered to his purpoſe, though tenderly affected with their concern for him. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem for the name of the Lord Jeſus." and when his laſt conflict approached, apprized of what was before him, he advanced without diſmay—"I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand."

ST. PAUL might have avoided all the evils which he endured becauſe he belonged to Chriſt, by only practically denying him: But he dared not deny him. He knew the conſequences which would follow the part he acted. "If we ſuffer we ſhall alſo reign with him; *if we deny him, he alſo will deny us.* Having reſpect to the recompence of reward," he preſſed on, exulting in the proſpect before him—"I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge, ſhall give me in that day."

"IF to neglect profeſſing Chriſt, when it expoſed to ſuch ſufferings, was conſidered as denying him, and incurred the forfeiture of an intereſt in him, will it now be diſpenſed with? Now, when it expoſeth to no ſuffering, or loſs? When it both became the moſt cheap and eaſy of all duties?

ARE the terms of acceptance with God in Chriſt changed? Are they not the ſame as formerly?

Doubtleſs they are eſſentially the ſame. "There is no reſpect of perſons with God." If to neglect the badges of diſcipleſhip was formerly to deny Chriſt, it is ſtill to deny him. *If we deny him, he alſo will deny us.*

III. CHRIST may be denied by a perverſion of the goſpel, cauſing it to become another goſpel.

SOME of this deſcription were found in the primitive church. Such were thoſe who made Chriſt the miniſter of ſin—who conſidered the deſign of his coming, not to be "to deſtroy the works of the devil," but to render it ſafe to live in ſin and indulge depravity. Such were thoſe who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; and the doctrine of Balaam, which were probably nearly akin, giving countenance to uncleanneſs. Such were alſo thoſe pretendedly enlightened perſons, who claimed knowledge in divine things, ſuperior to that of the apoſtles, and taught that chaſtity, and temperance, and ſundry other duties enjoined of God, were not obligatory on believers. Theſe are deſcribed by St. Peter and Jude, as enemies of Chriſt.

IN later ages the goſpel hath not been leſs corrupted, by ſome, who have called themſelves Chriſtians. It hath become in their hands, another goſpel.

IT may be difficult preciſely to determine, all who in this way deny Chriſt: But when the manifeſt tendency of any ſcheme, called Chriſtian, is to lead to ſin, render ſecure in ſin, or build the hope of ſalvation on any other foundation than the mer-

cy of God, and merits of the Redeemer, it muſt lead to a practical denial of Chriſt. To the ſacred ſtandard ſhould every ſyſtem be referred. Thoſe which deviate eſſentially therefrom, lead to a denial of Chriſt; and will produce a denial by him before his Father in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

If we do not miſtake the Scriptures, thoſe who deny Chriſt are without hope; and thoſe who reject, and thoſe who neglect the goſpel, or refuſe to confeſs the Savior, are to be reckoned among them.

SOME are otherwiſe minded. "If a perſon only acts ſincerely, no matter what his religious principles, (ſay ſome) or whether he hath religious principles; he will find mercy with God and be accepted of him;" an opinion which is ſpreading in this liberal age!

WE would gladly adopt it, and receive to the arms of charity all who appear to act honeſtly, could we ſee reaſon for it. But, in our apprehenſion, the word of truth condemns thoſe who deny Chriſt, and declares that they will be denied by him before his heavenly Father. We read of damnable hereſies—of thoſe who are given up to ſtrong deluſions that they ſhould believe a lie, that they might be damned."—And find an expreſs declaration, cutting off unbelievers from all hope.—"He that believeth not ſhall be damned."

WHATEVER God may do with thoſe who have not the goſpel, thoſe to whom it is ſent muſt believe, receive and obey it, or periſh in their ſins. This is ſo plainly and expreſsly declared in the

word of truth, that we wonder doubts ſhould ariſe in the minds of thoſe who believe it.

Nor is it leſs ſtrange, that confeſſing Chriſt ſhould be thought a matter of indifference. Scripture is equally expreſs reſpecting this matter, as the other. We have ſeen that under the former diſpenſation, God's covenant and the tokens of it were commanded, under penalty of exciſion from his people—That in the apoſtolic age, Chriſt was to be confeſſed, under penalty of being denied by him in the preſence of God. Theſe are not matters of doubt.

THEY are ſtoney ground hearers who "are offended when perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word." Theſe bring no fruit to perfection.

If the terms of acceptance with Chriſt are the ſame now as formerly: If they are not lowered down from their original, a denial of him, either verbal or practical, will ſhut men out of his kingdom.

It becomes thoſe who have a hope toward God while ſuch their ſtate, to conſider theſe things. "It is a faithful ſaying—If we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him: *If we deny him, he alſo will deny us.*"

SERMON XX.

The Fear which terminates in the Second Death.

REVELATION xxi. 8.

The fearful—shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

THE terms on which only we can be Chriſt's diſciples are laid before us in the Scriptures, and we are counſelled to conſider them before we engage to be his.

THOUGH Chriſt was born to be a king, his kingdom is not of this world. He doth not perſuade men with the proſpect of great things here; but on the contrary warns his followers, that "in this world they ſhall have tribulation;" pointing them to another, as the place of their reſt, and teaching them there to expect the reward of their labors and ſuffering here. And here the ſaints in every age, have "groaned, being burdened. Had God provided nothing better for them, he would be aſhamed to be called their God.

The primitive Chriſtians drank largely of the bitter cup. All the apoſtles, except John, are ſaid to have ſealed their teſtimony with their blood. John at an advanced age, died peaceably in his bed at Epheſus. But he did not eſcape perſecution here. When the revelation was made to him, he was in exile "for the word of God and for the teſtimony of Jeſus. For his conſolation, and for the edification of the church, he was viſited in his lonely ſtate, by the exalted Redeemer, who unveiled futurity before him, briefly ſketching the changes which were to paſs over his people till the conſummation of all things. The viſion cloſed with the ſolemn, dreadful proceſs of the great day, and its conſequences to the righteous and to the wicked!

THE divine viſitant enlarged on the glories of the heavenly ſtate beyond any of the prophets who had gone before. The deſcription is clothed in figurative language, affording only a partial view of "the glory which is to be revealed;" ſufficient however to convince us, that "eye hath not ſeen, ear heard, or the heart of man conceived the things which God hath prepared for thoſe who love him."

BUT who will be made to poſſeſs theſe glorious things? They are offered to all who hear the ſound of the goſpel; but conquering believers will only attain them. Their contraſt will be the portion of others.

THIS life is a warfare, in which we are called to contend with our own corruptions and with the powers of darkneſs—"He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things:" But thoſe who are overcome,

will have their part in the lake of fire—which is the second death.

To understand the grounds of this contest is highly important. Mistakes here may be fatal. To assist the inquirer, the characters of conquerors and captives are drawn in the scriptures. The verse of which the text is a part, mentions several general characters of the latter kind, and determines their future portion—*The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.*

IN the prosecution of our subject, only one of these general characters will be considered—*the fearful.*

WHO then are intended by *the fearful?* And what is the fear which leads to destruction?

FEARFUL, is a term seldom used to describe sinners. It occurs, we believe, in no other scripture. Every kind of fear is not sinful; much less inconsistent with a state of grace. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—it disposes the subject of it to mind the things which belong to his peace, and flee to the hope set before him in the gospel. The fear of God is often used to describe the good man, and given as a leading trait in his character. It is noted in favor of Obadiah, the servant of Ahab, that he "feared the Lord greatly."

To have no fear of God before one's eyes, is expressive of great obduracy in sin; of the last grade

of depravity. Yet in the text, *the fearful*, are mentioned as the firſt rank of thoſe who will have their part in the burning lake! What then is this fear?

IT may be of ſeveral kinds; particularly—*That which precludes truſt in God, and reliance on his grace in Chriſt—that which operates to explain away the law of God—that which puts men upon duty in order to atone for ſin—and that which ſhrinks from the hardſhips of religion.*

I. THE fear which leads down to the lake of fire, may be *that which precludes truſt in God and reliance on his grace in Chriſt.*

FAITH in Chriſt, and reliance on divine grace in him, are conditions of ſalvation. Where theſe are wanting Chriſt will not profit. Faith and reliance are united. The latter is dependant on the former, and riſeth out of it. "He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him."

THE fearful and unbelieving are here ſet together—*the fearful and unbelieving ſhall have their part*—Perhaps they are thus joined to intimate that the fear intended precludes the faith to which the promiſes are made.

THE ſinner who is the ſubject of this fear hath ſo deep a ſenſe of the ſinfulneſs of ſin, eſpecially of his own, that he is afraid to make God his hope—afraid to look up to the throne of grace, or to aſk mercy of God. He would gladly flee the divine preſence, like the firſt guilty pair, when they heard the voice of God walking in the garden af-

ter their fall. When fear hath this effect, it drives the sinner from the mercy which alone can save him.

"CHRIST came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came to seek and save that which was lost." To sinners, mercy is offered in him. Were we without sin, we should have no need of mercy. If we flee from Christ because we are sinners, we flee the mercy which alone can save us, and put offered salvation from us; for it is offered us only in him. To drive sinners away from the Savior by fear, when he can hold them no longer secure in sin, is an old device of the deceiver, which hath probably often succeeded.

ON secure and awakened sinners, different delusive arts are practised. The former are persuaded that sin is a trivial evil, far from meriting eternal punishment; that God is not greatly offended at it; that it is easy to obtain forgiveness; that as we are required to forgive every offender who saith, I repent, God will do the same; that it is only to ask mercy, when we can sin no longer, and it will be immediately granted; so that there is very little danger in sin. But those who are awakened—who see the evil of sin, and tremble for fear of God's judgments, are tempted to believe that divine justice will only be exercised, especially toward them—that their sins are unpardonable; their day of grace ended, and that they have nothing before them but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment." In such suggestion, the design of the tempter is to drive sinners to def-

pair, and thus drive them away from Chriſt. If he avails to effect it, his end is gained; for there is ſalvation in no other.

IT is emphatically true of the deſpairing ſinner, that he "cannot go to Chriſt for life." All who go to him, believe him able and willing to ſave. Devoid of this faith none can go to him. Therefore doth the fear which precludes faith lead down to ruin.

II. FEAR which *operates to explain away the law of God, hath the ſame effect.*

THIS is ſometimes the effect of fear. Thoſe who believe that there is a God, and that the holy ſcriptures are his word, cannot feel ſecure while they conſider themſelves condemned by his law, and view themſelves as the objects of his wrath.

THEREFORE do the ſlaves of depravity endeavor to explain away God's law—therefore to perſuade themſelves that certain duties are not required—that certain ſelf denials are not enjoined; or that there is ſomething in their particular caſe which exempts them from *this or that,* which is required of others.

THE cunning which ſome diſcover in finding out excuſes and evaſions, by which to cheat themſelves and ſilence their conſciences, is affecting. It ſhews them to be the ſlaves of Satan, and ſervants of corruption, and that they love their maſters, and refuſe to go out free, when liberty is offered.

WHEN people of this deſcription pretend to inquire what is their duty, their real deſign is to

evade the obligations of it. And they often ſucceed to perſuade themſelves that they are free from the obligations of it. But few others are deceived. The veil of the covering ſpread over their deſigns and views, is opaque only to themſelves; to others it is tranſparent, and leaves them without excuſe.

FREQUENT inſtances of this unfairneſs are viſible in the world. When people make themſelves eaſy and ſecure, without "faith which works by love and purifies the heart—without repentance which mourns for ſin as diſhonorable to God, and in itſelf an evil thing, and a bitter, and without devotedneſs to the ſervice of God, as well as a reliance on his grace in Chriſt, no matter what they ſubſtitute in the place of theſe graces, all is of no avail; hope is built on the ſand. That many of theſe vain ſubſtitutes are to be found among men, Who is inſenſible? When fear hath this effect, it leads down to the fiery lake.

III. SOMETIMES *fear puts men upon duty in order to atone for ſin and merit the divine favor.* Afraid of God's judgments, they ſet themſelves to do commanded duties, and place their dependance on theſe doings of their own.

DUTIES done by men have nothing meritorious in them. The deſign of many things which God hath enjoined is to ſerve as a ſchoolmaſter to bring men to Chriſt. None are intended to ſave by any virtue in them. By nothing which man can do is God made his debtor. Neither doth ought

done by man recommend to the divine favor if perverted and made the ground of hope toward God.

THE ſinner's beſt recommendation to the divine favor is a ſenſe of his own demerit, which leads him humble and ſelf abaſed to caſt himſelf on grace in a mediator. His moſt prevalent prayer is that made by the publican—"God be merciful to me a ſinner." Sinners are invited to the Savior, and encouraged to hope in him—"Look unto me and be ye ſaved all the ends of the earth. It is a faithful ſaying, that Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners." But he ſaves only thoſe who receive and truſt in him. If we go about to eſtabliſh our own righteouſneſs, relying on our own doings as the ground of our acceptance with God, he will give to us according to our works—"Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compaſs yourſelves about with ſparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the ſparks that ye have kindled: This ſhall ye have from mine hand, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow."*

NOT that ſinners are to neglect the means of grace, or indulge in ſin. When God promiſed his church to give them a new heart, and cauſe them to walk in his ſtatutes, he declared that thoſe bleſſings ſhould be given in anſwer to prayer—"Yet for this will I be inquired of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them." And when the apoſtle teaches how to ſeek renewing grace, he directs to "lay apart all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of

* Iſaiah l. 11.

naughtineſs and receive with meekneſs, the ingrafted word."

SAVING grace is perhaps, never given till it is aſked of God. Sinners are made to ſee their need of this divine gift and led to cry to God for it. It is then when they aſk that they receive. That they ſhall not aſk in vain, is intimated with ſufficient clearneſs in the word of truth. "Whoſoever ſhall call on the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved. If thou kneweſt the gift of God—*thou wouldeſt have aſked of him*, and he would have given thee living water."

YET the ſinner merits nothing by any doings of his. The true penitent is ſenſible of it. He relies on grace alone; and aſks mercy of God for the ſake of him "who died for his offences, and roſe again for his juſtification." He ſeeks in the uſe of appointed means becauſe it is the way of duty, and the way in which God is wont "to have mercy, on whom he will have mercy;" who are commonly choſen from among thoſe who ſeek his face.

As fear puts ſome on duty, it excites others to that which is not duty—puts them on doing things which are not required. Such are the pilgrimages and penances of the Romaniſts; and ſuch the ſeverities which ſome others have practiſed on themſelves with a view to atone for ſin and render Deity propitious.

THESE have no tendency to conciliate heaven. A curſe is more likely to follow them than a bleſſing; yet in this way ſome have thought to

atone for sin and make peace with an offended God!*

IV. THERE is yet one other kind of fear which leads to destruction—that *which causes men to shrink from the hardships of religion*; and decline the difficulties which lie in the way of duty.

DIFFICULTIES and temptations were not peculiar to the first ages of Christianity. St. Paul, after mentioning his own, declares them, in a measure, common to all Christ's followers—"Yea, and all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

THE trials and difficulties of the righteous are divers, but none escape them. Many arise from indwelling corruption—many from an insnaring world—many from Satan's malice and devices.

IN fallen man there is a bias to error and wickedness. Not to suffer his own lusts to draw him away, and entice him to sin, requires great self denial.

FROM a wicked world temptations also arise and difficulties spring up. In this land, the enemies of religion, have not power to kill and destroy the faithful; but they have power to pour contempt upon them. Cruel mockings may severely try those who fear neither the gibbet, nor the stake. These do try the people of God at this day.

NEITHER do the powers of darkness cease to trouble and afflict—to assault the faithful with their temptations, and to lay snares to entangle them.

* Vide Sermon on Colossians ii. 8.

"Your adverſary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour." Satan's devices are without number—his attacks are made from every quarter; and he is often ſo hidden that it is difficult to diſcover him. Sometimes he aſſumes the maſk of religion—is "transformed into an angel of light," the more effectually to cover his dark deſigns. Such is his enmity that he is indefatigable in his endeavors to ſeduce and to deſtroy—ſuch his craft and experience, that he is wiſe to accompliſh his nefarious deſigns: And againſt the ſaints his rage is the greater, becauſe he knoweth that his time is ſhort.

HERE the people of God live in a ſtate of warfare—conflict with many enemies and ſuffer many ſorrows. Often they are called to ſuffer for Chriſt—becauſe they are numbered among his followers and wear his livery.

IF any of theſe things move us, if we are afraid to encounter theſe hardſhips, are diſcouraged in our Chriſtian courſe and induced to turn back from after Chriſt, our fear will deſtroy us—it will cauſe us *to have our part in the lake of fire—which is the ſecond death.*

THIS hath happened to ſome who have aſſumed the Chriſtian name, and for a time appeared among Chriſt's diſciples! They have forſaken him.

THERE is an hour of temptation, which trieth thoſe who dwell on the earth; many fail in the trying hour. Attacked by enemies and aſſaulted by temptations, they yield themſelves captives to

their ſpiritual enemies. This happens to ſome who had "heard the word and received it with joy—in the time of temptation, they are offended and fall away." Wanting courage to ſtand on the Lord's ſide, when it expoſes them to reproach and ſufferings, they ſuffer themſelves to be overcome of evil, and fall from their ſtedfaſtneſs. Theſe are Chriſtians only in name. The real Chriſtian poſſeſſeth a noble courage which raiſeth him ſuperior to every trial, and enableth him to ſubdue every enemy. The ſtorms of temptation beat upon him; but he ſtands firm—reſiſts the powers of darkneſs and his own corruptions—is moved neither by the frowns, nor flatteries of the world. Like an eminent ſaint of old, he "hath reſpect to the recompence of reward," keeps heaven in his eye, and preſſeth on in his way thither. "Through Chriſt ſtrengthening him, he doth all things and abounds—holds out to the end and is made more than a conqueror."

To ſuch "pertain the promiſes—they overcome—will inherit all things. God will be their God, and they will be his children."

BUT thoſe who cannot, "endure hardneſs as good ſoldiers"—who faint, and fail in the day of trial, ſuffering the enemy to prevail, and themſelves to be overcome, "will loſe that which they have wrought—others will take their crowns, *and they will have their part in the lake of fire and brimſtone: Which is the ſecond death.*

THUS we have seen who are intended by the fearful, and their sad state. Influenced by fear which drives them from the Savior; or leads them to explain away God's law; or drive them to duty in order to atone for sin; or too timid to take up the cross and follow Christ, they have no part in him. They are afraid of misery; and their fear indulged, will bring misery upon them far beyond their fear! For "who knows the power of God's anger."

BEFORE us the door of mercy is yet open. We are invited to Christ for life. God hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. He is ready to receive the returning prodigal. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. He offers pardon and peace to the chief of sinners. The deeper sense we have of sin, the more we abhor ourselves for sin, the more welcome to his grace.

WEARY and heavy laden sinners are particularly invited to the Savior. He will not send them empty away. As the returning prodigal was received by his father, so is every repenting sinner, by his Father in heaven. When the prodigal resolved to return with, a "Father I have sinned—the father saw him a great way off," and all his bowels yearned over him—"he had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him"—bid him a hearty welcome—lavished the richest favors on him, and called all to rejoice at his return. In like manner our heavenly Father receives the returning penitent. This is the spirit of the parable.

First see them, ye who mourn in Zion. Come empty and naked as ye are, and fall down before an offended God, with, "Father I have sinned—God be merciful to me a sinner." Come thus to God, and cast yourselves on his grace in Christ, and his grace will be sufficient for you. We are warranted to promise you a kind reception.

Let none think to hide their sins by excuses or palliations. They are all open to the divine eye. "There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Neither let any think to atone for their sins by doings of their own. The blood of Christ is the only atonement. Our best services are polluted with sin. Let us endeavour to see our sins as they are, renounce them all, and repair to the mercy of God in Christ. There is a fulness of merit in Christ, and a fulness of mercy in God. There we may trust and not be ashamed.

Let none be discouraged by the difficulties which lie in their way, or faint under the hardships of the cross. If God calls us to trials he will support us under them—yea, if we make him our hope, and are not needlessly wanting to ourselves, he will make us more than conquerors, he will make us triumphers in Christ. But if we fear to enter the lists against our spiritual enemies or to endure ought to which we are called in the way of duty, whether it be contempt, sufferings, or toils, we shall bring greater torments on ourselves by looking back in the day of trial, than by pressing forward, and bearing all which duty requires.

Our ſorrows, if we abide faithful, and are not moved away from the hope of the goſpel, will be only temporary; and under the preſſure of them, we ſhall be ſupported by Omnipotence; but if we draw back, and refuſe to deny ourſelves, fainting in the day of trial, our ſorrows and ſufferings will be eternal, and as ſuch as Omnipotence can only inflict!

SERMON XXI.

The Ends of Family Institution, with observations on the Importance of Education.

MALACHI ii. 15.

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed.—

TOWARD the close of the Babylonish captivity, religion revived among the Jews. Several zealous and able reformers were raised up and advanced to power, whose influence was blessed to call back that people from their declensions, and prepare them for mercy. But the effect of their labors was only temporary. When they were gone off the stage, the people again apostatized, neglected the worship and ordinances of God, and became vicious and corrupt. This prophet, who lived several ages after their return to Canaan, was sent to reprove their irreligion and the immoralities, which abounded among them, and had infected every order of men.

ONE of the ſins then riſe in Iſrael, was a family ſin. Family contentions, which frequently terminated in divorces, were become common.

DIVORCES were permitted to the Hebrews, "for the hardneſs of their hearts, but it was not ſo from the beginning."

LARGER communities are all made up of families. Evils therefore which affect the latter, cannot but affect the former. Were all the families which compoſe an empire divided and unhappy, the empire would be ſo.

IT is alſo worthy of notice, that the firſt rudiments of character, which render good or bad, and cauſe people to be bleſſings or curſes in ſociety, are commonly begun in thoſe nurſeries of our race. The bias there given, ſeldom wholly wears off; it is generally carried, in degree, through life. Probably many of the evils which afflicted the Jews in the days of this prophet, had their origin in the cradles of the nation. He was therefore directed to ſtrike at the root of evils, and by endeavoring to reform the ſmaller ſocieties, of which the larger were compoſed, to reform the whole. With this view he led back the minds of thoſe among whom he miniſtered, to the origin of families, and declared the merciful deſign of the Moſt High, in their inſtitution—*That he might ſeek a godly ſeed.*

SEEKING *a godly ſeed* is not the only deſign. It is however a principal deſign, and will be chiefly regarded in the following diſcourſe.

ONE thing deſigned is the comfort and advantage of the ſeveral members of theſe little communities. But to the attainment of theſe ends, they muſt keep reſpectively, in their places, and act faithfully in them. The heads muſt live together in harmony, and unite in ordering the common affairs of the ſociety; and the inferior members muſt ſubmit to their authority, and do the duties of their ſtations.

HUMAN happineſs greatly depends on the temper and conduct of thoſe who are connected in the neareſt relations, and live together. Suppoſe trouble abroad, yet if one hath peace and friendſhip in his family, and finds order and affection at home, he will not be very unhappy. He will often "retire to his ſecret chambers, and ſhut the doors about him, till the evils are paſt." But the houſe divided againſt itſelf, is a ſcene of confuſion and trouble. Contentions there, are like a continual dropping.

THE man who hath affluence and honor; who is reſpected or envied abroad, is but a wretch, if his retirements are unquiet; if his family connexions are peeviſh and diſagreeable, and the inferior members riſe in rebellion and refuſe obedience to his reaſonable requirements, or neglect the duties of their ſtations. Fidelity and affection in the neareſt relations, yields the greateſt temporal felicity; the want of them occaſions the moſt pungent grief which is experienced in life; that which ariſes from ſenſe of guilt excepted.

THE part acted by every member of a family, affects the whole. None can rejoice or mourn

alone. All participate in the joy or grief. All are affected by the diſcharge, or neglect of relative duties: Joy and ſorrow keep pace with them.

NEITHER are the evils which ariſe from theſe abuſes to be avoided by celibacy, without incurring others of a ſerious nature. Man is formed for ſociety. An help meet was neceſſary even in Eden. To have remained alone would have rendered an earthly paradiſe a tireſome place. Therefore was a ſuitable companion given of God, to crown the joys of innocence.

THE comfort and advantage of the members is manifeſtly one deſign of family inſtitution; but where the duties of the ſeveral relations are neglected, or counteracted, the ends are fruſtrated, and the bleſſing changed into a curſe. "It is better to dwell in the wilderneſs than with a contentious and angry woman." And the woman who inſtead of a kind and virtuous companion, is joined to a tyrant, or a man of Belial, muſt have ſorrow upon ſorrow, till death comes to her relief.

BUT the deſign of family inſtitution expreſſed in the laſt clauſe of the text—*That he might ſeek a godly ſeed*, will be chiefly attended to.

WE are here taught that God made one, and only one to be man's companion and helper—*that he might ſeek a godly ſeed.* One is neceſſary for this purpoſe; more would rather hinder than help. With one there is a joint intereſt; more would cauſe diviſions.

To anſwer the ends propoſed, the connexion muſt be for life. It muſt not be left to the par-

ties, or either of them, to diſſolve it at pleaſure, as the Jews of that age contended. This liberty the prophet ſhews to be contrary to the ſpirit and deſign of marriage. He obſerves that though God *had the reſidue of the Spirit*—all power, and could eaſily have made many, he made only one, to be the companion and helper of man—that this indicated the deſign of marriage to be an indiſſoluble connexion, which was ordained to continue till death. This which is intimated in the text, is confirmed by our Savior in his reply to the Phariſees who queſtioned him on this ſubject.*

IN farther diſcuſſing our ſubject, *after a few deſultory obſervations on the importance of education, eſpecially parental education, we ſhall inquire in what ways, and by what means parents are required to ſeek a godly ſeed.*

MUCH culture is neceſſary to man's attaining his proper rank in creation. This ſhould begin at an early period, and naturally devolves on parents, who, by providential appointment, are guardians of the infancy and childhood of their offspring.

BRUTES need no inſtruction in order to fill the places deſigned for them of the Creator. Neither do they need example. Inſtinct ſupplies their places—teacheth all which they need to know; and teacheth perfectly. The ſeveral kinds of beaſts and birds, ſhut out from their dams, and ſecluded from their own ſpecies, act according to their na-

* Matthew xix. 3—10.

tures, in the ſame manner, as though brought up with them—diſcover the ſame diſpoſitions—uſe the ſame methods of ſeeking their food, and providing for themſelves and their young—and expreſs themſelves in the ſame language, or by the ſame notes. Nature left to herſelf, reſpecting every thing which belongs to them, is a ſufficient, yea an infallible inſtructor. Some of the brutes may be taught to mimick man; others to know and ſerve him; but theſe are foreign to their rank. Every thing, properly belonging to them, is taught by nature, independent of man. Had man never exiſted, ſome of them might have lived and filled their places in creation without him.

But man, the head of this lower world, requires particular attention. His mind requires more than his body. Should man come forward to act his part here, with only the ſame kind of attention which nature teacheth the brute to beſtow on her young, what would he be? How would he appear? Suppoſe ſome ſavage horde to attend only to the bodies of their offspring, during infancy and childhood, and then ſend them abroad to follow nature!—Uncultivated nature! Living at large like the brutal inhabitants of the foreſt! Can we form an idea of ought more ſhocking? Surely ſuch a people would be more brutal than the brutes!

To prevent theſe dreadfuls, and render man the noble creature for which he is deſigned, happy in himſelf, an honor to his Creator, and a bleſſing among God's works, are the ends propoſed in ed-

ucation. Theſe uſually originate in that culture which is begun by parents. The foundation of honor or infamy, uſefulneſs or miſchief, happineſs or miſery, is commonly laid in the morning of life. The impreſſions then made, are deep and laſting; the bias then given to the mind, goes far to form the character of the man. We ſee therefore the goodneſs of God in an inſtitution which hath ſuch important objects in view—which is deſigned to plant in infant minds the ſeeds of virtue, and form mankind for uſefulneſs and honor.—*And wherefore one? That he might ſeek a godly ſeed.*

THIS work would have been incumbent on man had he retained his firſt eſtate. It would then have belonged to parents to cultivate the tender mind and direct it in right ways. Marriage was inſtituted before the apoſtacy, of which a principal deſign is that mentioned in the text: For the prophet ſpeaks of man in his original ſtate. In innocence man had his work aſſigned him—was made for action. Idleneſs would have conſtituted no part of his felicity, had he remained upright. When he came out of the Creator's hand, he was "put into the garden to dreſs it and to keep it." His diſpoſition to idleneſs may have been occaſioned by the fall. Had man retained his maker's image, it is not probable that young minds would have received habits of virtue, and been imbued with knowledge, without parental aid—that inſtinct would have ſupplied the place of inſtruction, and ſuperſeded the uſe of it.

HAD man remained upright his whole work have been diverſe from that which now employs him. The earth would have required little culture—none which would have wearied its inhabitants. The mind, free from every corrupt bias, would have been open to inſtruction, which would have flowed from the parent and been received by the child, with delightful eaſe and joy. Man devoted to the ſervice of God, would have devoted his all to God, eſpecially his offspring. Then to have poured knowledge, and eſpecially the knowledge of God, into the placid docile mind of the pious youth, what delight would it have given to the ſoul glowing with divine love!

SINCE the apoſtacy, children are the joy of parents. With all their depravity and perverſeneſs, which greatly lower down the comfort parents would otherwiſe occaſion, they love them next to life, and ſee their improvements with peculiar joy. Eſpecially doth the godly parent rejoice to witneſs in them good things toward the Lord—religious diſpoſitions—concern to know and ſerve God, and become *a godly ſeed.* "He hath no greater joy than to obſerve his children walking in the truth." Had man retained his firſt eſtate, his joy of this kind would have been full. He would have trained up a holy, happy progeny—"a ſeed to ſerve the Lord."

IN the preſent ſtate of human nature, the raiſing of *a godly ſeed,* is more difficult, but not leſs neceſſary. Endeavors to this end may be even more ſo. Man left from his childhood, unin-

ſtructed and unreſtrained, to follow his natural bias, would become a monſter among God's creatures! Therefore the importance of parental faithfulneſs, as divine honor, and human happineſs are regarded.

SERMON XXII.

Parental Duties considered and urged.

MALACHI ii. 15.

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed.

SOME general obſervations on the importance of education, eſpecially parental education, were made in the preceding diſcourſe. We are now to conſider the ways and means by which parents are *to ſeek a godly ſeed.*

ONLY general directions can here be given. Much will be left to the diſcretion of thoſe concerned.

SOME of the principal parental duties are, *Dedication of their children to God, followed by inſtruction—reſtraint—good example, and prayer.*

WE ſhall treat on each of theſe briefly in their order.

1. OF *dedication of children to God.* By *a godly ſeed*, children conſecrated to the ſervice of God, and ſet apart for him, is commonly intended. This

implies some rites of consecration. These there have been, probably, from the beginning; though we have no information what they were, till the days of Abram.

BEFORE the flood we read of "sons of God" who married "the daughters of men;" a sad union which led to the universal degeneracy of mankind. The "sons of God" are supposed to have been the descendants of Seth; "the daughters of men," to have been of the family of Cain. But why the distinction of "sons of God, and daughters of men?" It arose, no doubt, from external differences. The former had the seal of godliness set upon them, whatever that seal might be; and were trained up to attend the worship and ordinances of God—they were visibly of the household of faith; none of which were the case with the latter.* That the former were all renewed, and children of God by regeneration, is not probable—they are termed sons of God, on account of their covenant relation to him.

* TENDERS of pardon and life were made to the whole human race, through a Mediator, and the church at first included the whole family of Adam; but this did not long continue. Cain, enraged that his offering was not accepted, slew his brother, and "went out from the presence of the Lord"—left his father's house, in which God was worshipped, and where his ordinances were administered—cast off religion, and taught his children to disregard it. His progeny were not deficient in worldly wisdom. They cultivated the arts of life, and made improvements in them, as appears from the sketch of their history given by Moses.† But they were without God in the world; having cast off his fear, and the apprehension of his presence, and their accountableness, which often follow the dereliction of the divine institutions.

† Genesis iv. 17—22.

So the posterity of Jacob were called "the children of God—the people of God—a holy seed—a royal priesthood," because of their external, nominal distinctions. These appropriate terms continued as long as they remained God's visible people, and had the seal of his covenant set upon them, though they had so corrupted themselves as to be even worse than the heathen. And Jerusalem is called the *holy city* even after it had filled up the measure of its wickedness by murdering the Lord of glory.*

From the days of Abraham, we know the seal of God's covenant, and how parents have been required to dedicate their offspring to him, as a visible sign of their being consecrated to his service, and as a bond on parents to train them up in his fear. And those who have been of the household of faith, and been duly instructed, have considered themselves obliged to discharge these duties; nor have they neglected them.

2. Dedication *must be followed by instruction.* Parents must cultivate the tender mind—instil the principles of virtue—infuse the knowledge of God, and of the duties due to God and man. This is a matter of the greatest importance. If youthful minds are not imbued with knowledge and virtue, they will not remain blank; the void will be filled with that which tends to mischief, and leads to woe and infamy.

When we look among pagans and savages, we are struck with their vices and follies, which

* Matthew xxvii. 52.

raiſe our diſguſt, or excite our pity. But who hath made us to differ from them! Is it not that divine Sovereign who "divided to the nations their inheritance, when he ſeparated the ſons of Adam," who caſt our lot among the civilized and enlightened, who having been taught, of God, taught us the way of happineſs? Had we been born among heathens, we ſhould probably have been heathens; if among ſavages, ſhould not have differed from them—ſhould have gloried, perhaps in thoſe refinements in cruelty, which they conſider an accompliſhment, but which we ſhudder to hear related. It is not probable that we ſhould have had native diſcernment ſufficient to have raiſed us above our fellows—to have enabled us to diſcover their deluſions and the abſurdity of their views. Had we been denied revelation, we ſhould probably have been ignorant of our fallen ſtate and need of a Savior, and might have "periſhed for lack of viſion."

How far God might have pitied our neceſſary ignorance, we know not; but we can now diſcern no way of ſalvation, except by faith in Chriſt, with repentance from dead works. Now, the knowledge of theſe, and the neceſſity of holineſs of heart and life, we have received, not by immediate revelation, but from our fellow men. And moſt of thoſe who receive them, to ſaving effect, receive the firſt impreſſions in early life; receive them from thoſe with whom they are converſant in their tender years. The forming mankind to virtue, and rendering them *a godly ſeed*, depends much on

the means *then* uſed with them, and the bias *then* given to the mind.

3. RESTRAINT is *alſo neceſſary in the morning of life.*

BY nature man is inclined to evil. This diſpoſition originated in the apoſtacy and deſcends to the whole race, rendering them untractable and unteachable—eaſily ſuſceptible of bad impreſſions, and indiſpoſed to good ones. It appears and operates at a very early period of life. "The wicked are eſtranged from the womb; they go aſtray as ſoon as they are born ſpeaking lies. Their poiſon is like the poiſon of a ſerpent; they are like the deaf adder that ſtoppeth her ear."—

SUCH declarations are not indeed to be underſtood literally. None are actual tranſgreſſors, before they are capable of moral action, which is the ſtate of the new born infant. He cannot ſpeak lies who hath not yet attained the power of ſpeech. The poiſon of human depravity may, however be compared to that of the ſerpent, which begins in its formation, and diſcovers itſelf when firſt capable of action. We ſee the effects of depravity in the child, while reaſon is yet weak and only budding forth. It is one of the firſt appearances in the progreſs of a human being from infancy to manhood. When theſe are diſcovered, reſtraint ſhould begin. Parents who *ſeek a godly ſeed*, ſhould no longer delay to counteract the corrupt diſpoſition, and endeavor to give the young creature, committed to their care, another and a better bias.

BUT, alas! Parental affection too often degenerates into weakneſs, and giving way to natural perverſeneſs, ſuffers it to take its courſe; the conſequences of which are often fatal to peace and honor in after life; perhaps in that alſo which is to come. It is of primary importance that reſtraint ſhould hold back the young agent from that which is evil; and as far as may be, prevent him from aſſociating with the vile, who diſregard the voice of conſcience and harden themſelves in ſin.

SUITABLE correction to impreſs an early ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and praiſe to encourage and allure in the paths of virtue, are alſo acts of kindneſs to the unexperienced creature who is entering on the war of life, and coming forward to act its part among enemies and temptations, and thus to prepare for honor or infamy, joy or miſery eternal. Though no fruit of this kind attention may immediately appear beneficial conſequences commonly follow; though ſometimes at a later period than was expected; yea after expectation hath ceaſed.

4. EXAMPLE *is another mean of ſeeking a godly ſeed.*

GOOD example is particularly incumbent on all who are exalted to rule; whether in larger, or ſmaller communities. In the hiſtory of Iſrael we obſerve the morals of the nation commonly agreeing with thoſe of the governing prince. Nor was this peculiar to that people; it holds generally, in a conſiderable degree, of every other. The manners and morals of all who live in ſociety, uſually

take a tinge from thoſe of their rulers. This is particularly the caſe with ſmaller ſocieties; eſpecially with families. Children often imbibe the ſentiments, learn the manners, and catch ſomewhat of the tempers of thoſe with whom they live, as well as learn their language. *Do we ſeek a godly ſeed?* It concerns us to be careful what examples we ſet before the youth who attend us.

YOUTH watch and obſerve adults, eſpecially thoſe to whom they look up as friends, and whoſe love and kindneſs they daily experience. Adults are diſpoſed to think favorably of thoſe who ſhew them kindneſs. From the view of a child, it hides every fault. That a thing was done by a reſpected parent, juſtifies it to a child, however criminal it might appear in another.

THE temper and conduct, of a benefactor, make a deeper impreſſion than his words, and have more influence on the judgment of thoſe entering on life. Even little children feel the force of our Savior's rule of judging—"By their fruits ye ſhall know them." Every thing conſpires to prejudice children in favor of parents, and to diſpoſe them to follow their examples. Bad example is in them eſpecially ſeducing. Children generally follow it, where it is ſet before them. Coinciding with their natural bias, precept and counſel are commonly loſt upon them, if taught by parental example to do evil. It is therefore of the greateſt importance, eſpecially to the members of a family, that the head ſhould "behave himſelf wiſely in a perfect

way, and walk within his houſe with a perfect heart."

5. PRAYER, *eſpecially family prayer is another means of ſeeking a godly ſeed.*

THIS duty is important, as it tends to ſolemnize the heart, and produce a ſerious and devout temper; and as it tends to draw down the divine bleſſing on thoſe who attend it.

WHEN children witneſs a parent daily looking up to heaven, and fervently imploring the divine bleſſing on himſelf and them—when they hear him humbly confeſſing ſin, and its demerits, and imploring pardon—when they obſerve him devoutly thanking God for exiſtence, for continuance in life, and for all its comforts—when they hear him aſking grace to help and divine direction and guidance—when they ſee him beſieigng the throne of grace for the Holy Spirit to renew and ſanctify them, enable them to do every duty, fill them with love to God and man, enable them to bear injuries and requite them with kindneſs, yea, to be good and do good—to make them faithful unto death and then to receive them to the manſions of glory, and are called to join in theſe ſolemn addreſſes to heaven, What other leſſon is equally inſtructive? What hath ſo direct a tendency to ſolemnize the heart and impreſs it with the moſt juſt and weighty religious ſentiments? In this view, family prayer is of vaſt importance. If attended as every ſerious perſon may attend it, cannot be wholly without effect, and hath often the happieſt effect.

IT is not great talents, or ſhowy gifts, but ſeriouſneſs, ſolemnity and fervor, which render prayer prevalent with God and beneficial to man, as a means of exciting to other duties, and producing religious awe and reverence.

THIS duty is alſo important, as tending to draw down the divine bleſſing on the devout worſhipper and on his connexions.

EVERY good gift cometh down from God; but his gifts are uſually beſtowed in anſwer to prayer—"Ye have not becauſe ye aſk not—Aſk, and it ſhall be given you——for every one that aſketh, receiveth."—Spiritual mercies are ſeldom given but in anſwer to prayer; and ſeldom long denied to earneſt perſevering prayer. This is the ſpirit of one of our Savior's parables,* and the purport of many paſſages in the word of God.

AND when a perſon hath omitted nothing in his power to make his children wiſe to ſalvation, what ſo natural, what ſo reaſonable, as to bring them to God, and pour out his ſoul before him, for his bleſſing upon them? And what ſo prevalent with "him who heareth prayer?"

IT is ſtoried of Auguſtine, who lived in the fourth century, that though the ſon of an eminently pious mother, he was a very vicious youth —that a Chriſtian ſeeing him paſs in the ſtreet, ſpake of him as an abandoned character, with whom it was diſgraceful to aſſociate—which another hearing, obſerved, that *he was the child of ſo many prayers, that he could not believe that he would be*

* Luke xviii. 1, &c.

loſt—nor was he loſt. Thoſe prayers were heard. He was called of God, and like Saul of Tarſus, made a choſen veſſel to bear God's name to a ſcoffing world, and do much in the cauſe of the divine Redeemer.*

THE fervent prayers which godly parents offer up for their children, aſcend like the prayers and alms of good Cornelius for a memorial before God. When ſincere and perſevering, they return not empty. They often draw down the divine bleſſing on thoſe for whom they are offered up. If they fail through filial obſtinacy and perverſeneſs, they draw a bleſſing on themſelves, to their eternal joy.

THESE are ſome of the ways in which parents ſhould *ſeek a godly ſeed.* But, alas! Theſe duties are much neglected; therefore the declenſion of religion, and the prevalence of vice.

THOSE who enter into covenant with God, bind themſelves to diſcharge theſe duties. Others are not devoid of obligation to do the ſame. They are duties which riſe out of the parental relation, and are indiſſolubly connected with it.

PARENTS have a fondneſs for their children, and wiſh their felicity. But do not ſome who believe them made for eternity, take care only for the mortal part, which after all their care muſt ere long become food for worms, and turn to duſt! Are there not parents who neither dedicate their children to God, nor teach them his fear, nor

* Witherſpoon's Sermon on Education.

walk before them in the right way, nor commend them to the divine mercy! Cruel parents! Unhappy children! How difficult, how dangerous their ſituation! By nature diſpoſed to error—aſſaulted by ſubtil enemies, whoſe temptations fall in with their natural bias, and are ſtrengthened by the conduct of thoſe whom they love as friends and revere as guides! Little chance have ſuch unexperienced and unſuſpecting creatures to eſcape the ſnares which ſurround them! Dangerous, and almoſt deſperate is their ſituation!

PERHAPS the endleſs miſery of ſome may be greatly chargeable on thoſe who under God, gave them being! Affecting thought! It concerns parents to think on theſe things. If they conſider, they muſt feel their obligation *to ſeek a godly ſeed*, and be afraid to neglect it.

AND let pious parents be perſuaded to labor and not faint in the diſcharge of the duties which they owe to God, and the young immortals committed to their care. Though their counſels may be contemned, and their prayers ſeem not to be regarded by him who hath power to change the heart, let them not be diſcouraged, but perſevere. "Thoſe who ſow in tears ſhall reap in joy." Though the ſeed lie long under the clods, it will not be loſt, but ſome how, bring forth fruit.

THE counſels, warnings, and examples of faithful godly parents commonly make ſome impreſſion on the children who affect to diſregard them. The moſt diſſolute have their ſerious moments; their pangs of remorſe and terror. At ſuch ſeaſons their

parents' warnings, prayers and tears recur to their minds, and seem to rise up before them. This often happens after parental labors have ceased; and after the impressions they might have made, were supposed to have been effaced, they sometimes produce happy effects.

FEW children who have been dedicated to God, taught to know and serve him, and the consequences which will follow their conduct here, and witnessed their parents' deep concern, and earnest cries to God in their behalf can forget them—they must, they do, at times, affect them. While any thing of this nature remains, there is hope.

SOME, who in early life, scoff at warning and counsel, are afterwards brought to repentance: And such often testify, that impressions made by parental faithfulness in their tender years, were the means of their awakening and amendment. This should encourage those whose children give them little hope, to persevere in the discharge of duty.

"THE Lord said of Abraham—I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, *that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*" What? The richest and most lasting blessings—*because* "*he would command his children—to keep the way of the Lord.*"

"IT is not a vain thing to serve God. Then—(when he maketh up his jewels) shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that

ſerveth him not." In no other way can we ſerve him more acceptably than by following Abraham's example—"commanding our houſeholds to ſerve the Lord," and ſetting them the example. Whoſo doth it, "ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward."

AND happy the youth who ſecond the endeavors of their parents to render them *a godly ſeed*. Such "will find life and obtain favor of the Lord." Here, they rejoice the hearts of thoſe who love them, and ſmooth the rugged path of age. The years which to others have no pleaſures in them, are not devoid of comfort to thoſe who witneſs filial piety and hope to live again in a godly offſpring. Such parents rejoice in death, and their *godly ſeed*, will rejoice with them forever, in heavenly manſions.

SERMON XXIII.

The Blessing of God on Filial Piety.

JEREMIAH XXXV. 19.

Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me forever.

ISRAEL were greatly depraved before the days of this prophet, who was sent to reprove and call them to repentance. The prophet faithfully discharged his trust; but labored to very little effect. The chiefs of the nation were offended at its warnings and predictions—rose up against him—shut him up in prison; yea in a dark dungeon, where he sank in the mire; and even sought his life! He was not, however discouraged. He continued "to warn the wicked from his way, that he should turn from it. None of these things moved him."

THIS was not the only messenger sent of God to warn that people—he sent to them all his servants, the prophets; but they would not hear. The Jews of that age flattered themselves, that God would nev-

er enter into judgment with them. "He might pour his fury on the heathen; but they ſhould eſcape—their place and nation would never feel the effects of his wrath, or become the theatre of his judgments—they were his people—neceſſary to his honor—he was their God; and would continue their God, whatever their character, or conduct."

THE prophets warned them of their miſtake—told them that the judgments of heaven hung over them—that their city and ſanctuary would be deſtroyed, many of them periſh in the war, and the reſidue be removed into ſtrange lands, there to ſerve their enemies—"but they ſeemed to that degenerate people as thoſe who mocked, and they believed them not."

THERE is a certain grade of depravity which ſcoffs at warnings and laughs at the ſhakings of God's ſpear! When this hath become the general character of a people, deſolating judgments are near. Thoſe who conceive mercy to be the only attribute of Deity; or the only attribute which he can exerciſe *towards them*, are commonly deaf to warnings. Sure evidence that they are given up of God—that his ſpirit hath ceaſed to ſtrive with them. Rarely are thoſe brought to repentance who entertain ſuch views of God. Perhaps never, unleſs their views of him are changed. They have no fear of God before their eyes. If mercy abſorbed every other attribute, there could be no place for fear. And of what enormity are thoſe incapable who have loſt the fear of God? Such

corruption of principle is the bane of practice, and prelude of ruin and wretchedneſs. The hiſtory of the Hebrews, and the hiſtory of mankind, confirm the truth of this remark.

THIS prophet having long warned his charge to no purpoſe, is here directed to apply to them in another manner—to try to ſhame them into contrition, by ſetting before them the part acted by a particular family which dwelt among them—the Rechabites, who had for ages religiouſly obeyed the injunctions of one of their anceſtors, left probably as his dying charge.

SOME of that progenitor's requirements ſeemed rigorous, but being the order of a reſpected anceſtor the family conſidered them as obligatory; nor could they be perſuaded to violate them in any particular, though publicly invited to it by a prophet.

IT *may be proper here to make ſome inquiries relative to theſe Rechabites—to the perſon whoſe charge they conceived ſo binding; and the nature and deſign of the charge.*

THE Rechabites are ſaid to have been a branch of the Kenites, and to have deſcended from Hobab, the ſon of Jethro, Moſes' father in law.*

WHILE Iſrael were encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, that Midianitiſh prieſt, or prince, viſited Moſes, bringing with him, Zipporah, the wife of Moſes and her children, who had been ſent to her father's as a place of ſafety, during the troubles in Egypt. Not long after, Hobab, the ſon

* Vide Henry and Brown's Dictionary.

of Jethro, appears to have been with Iſrael in the wilderneſs; and he was invited to go with them to the land of promiſe, and take his lot among them, and was promiſed an equal ſhare of bleſſings with the ſeed of Jacob—"If thou wilt go with us, it ſhall be, that what goodneſs the Lord ſhall do unto us, the ſame will we do unto thee." At firſt Hobab declined, but he eventually complied; as his deſcendants were among the Hebrews after their ſettlement in Canaan, and they continued among them, and remained a diſtinct family, down to the captivity.

ONE branch of theſe Kenites was denominated from Rechab, an illuſtrious chief of the houſe of Hobab; who had a ſon, or deſcendant, named Jonadab, or Jehonadab, as his name is ſometimes written. Jonadab was renowned for wiſdom and piety. He flouriſhed in the days of Jehu, almoſt three centuries before the Babyloniſh captivity; and was ſo famed for ſanctity and attachment to true religion, that only being ſeen in his company was a recommendation to the regard of its friends. Therefore was he treated with reſpect by Jehu, while he pretended a regard for the true God—therefore was he taken up by that prince into his chariot, and made his partner in the deſtruction of idolatry. Such was the man who left this charge to his deſcendants, which was ſo ſacredly regarded by them, for ſo long a term.

THIS was a remarkable family. Another who have paid equal attention to the orders of a departed progenitor, and in which none of the members

appear to have degenerated from his virtue, is not perhaps to be found in the annals of mankind! But our ſurpriſe will increaſe if we attend to the nature of the charge.

THE prophet was directed to gather the whole family of the Rechabites—bring them into the houſe of the Lord—ſet wine before them and invite them to drink. He obeyed; offering them a treat, as a family known and reſpected in Iſrael.

THIS was not done to tempt them, but to reprove the Jews, who reſorted in great numbers to the temple; though they had caſt off the fear of the God there worſhipped. God knew, and had probably informed the prophet, that the wine would be refuſed. It was refuſed, and the reaſon aſſigned—"We will drink no wine; for Jonadab, the ſon of Rechab, our father commanded us, ſaying, Ye ſhall drink no wine, ye, nor your ſons forever. Neither ſhall ye build houſe, nor ſow ſeed, nor have any: But all your days ye ſhall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days, in the land where ye be ſtrangers."

SOME of theſe may ſeem to be ſtrange reſtrictions; but they ſpeak the piety of him who laid them, and his regard to the eternal, if not to the temporal intereſts, of his poſterity. The prohibition ſeems to have been the ſame with the law of the Nazerites. Wine is doubtleſs here uſed in a large ſenſe, for every kind of ſtrong drink. "Wine was given to make glad the heart of man." He is allowed to uſe it with temperance and ſobriety: But ſo many abuſe it to their own hurt, and to the injury of ſo-

ciety, that it is rather a curſe, than a bleſſing, to the world. Seeing the evils which reſulted from the abuſe—the devaſtation of men and morals, which it occaſioned, this good man, from love to his offspring, warned them wholly to abſtain from it. And what evils would many others have avoided, had they conſidered the counſel as given to them, and like this family, religiouſly regarded it? The ravages of intemperance, exceed thoſe of the ſword; and the moral evils it hath occaſioned ſurpaſs deſcription!

BUT why the other reſtrictions included in the charge? Why muſt the deſcendants of Jonadab be denied the comfort of warm and convenient dwellings, and reſide in tents through every ſeaſon of the year, to all generations? Why muſt they poſſeſs neither fields nor vineyards, which were allowed to others, and promiſed to Iſrael, as part of the bleſſing, when they ſhould ſettle in Canaan?

PECULIARITIES unknown to us, might render it proper for them to ſubmit to ſelf denials to which others are not called. What they were we preſume not to determine.*

MANKIND are exceedingly prone to ſet up their reſt here, and promiſe themſelves permanent dwellings on this rolling ball. Could this man of God perſuade his poſterity that this was not their home, and engage them to ſeek another country, that is, an heavenly, and lay up their treaſure there, whatever ſelf denials it might coſt them, it muſt

* MR. HENRY undertakes to aſſign the reaſons of all theſe injunctions; but as none can be aſſigned which are not merely conjectural, we chooſe rather to leave each one to make his own conjectures, as he may find occaſion.

have been, on the whole for their advantage. This might be the general deſign of his counſel.

BUT whatever might be the deſign, admirable was the effect. The whole family ſeem to have liſtened to his advice, and for many ages to have obeyed his voice! "Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the ſon of Rechab our father, in all that he charged us—and done according to all that he commanded us!"

THIS was not ſaid only of themſelves, who then ſtood before the prophet, but of the whole family, from the time the charge was given, down to that day. There is not the ſmalleſt probability that a numerous family would inquire after, and find out a code of rules and regulations which had been given nearly three centuries before, and all take it on them to obſerve them, if they had been neglected by their fathers, down to their time. They had doubtleſs been obſerved with punctuality from the days of Jonadab. Their anſwer to the prophet implies it. This had been known in Iſrael. Therefore were they brought into public view, and made the occaſion of a ſolemn rebuke of that favored, but ungrateful people who had diſregarded the injunctions of an infinite God! This was the end propoſed in bringing the Rechabites into the temple at this time, and gave occaſion to the record here made to their honor, and to the bleſſings promiſed them from above.

SOME may laugh at the ſingularity of this ſtrange family—may conſider it an evidence of weakneſs to pay ſuch regard to the ſilly requiſi-

tions of a superstitious ancestor—deny themselves so many comforts—make themselves so singular—engage those with whom they married to conform to the rules of their house, and instil the same into their children from generation to generation! But whatever we may think of them, it is manifest that this supposed weakness met the divine approbation. The prophet speaks of them with honor; blesseth them in the name of the Lord, and declares, in his name, that their filial piety shall not go unrewarded. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, *Because* ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and—done according to all that he commanded you: *Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me forever.*"

THESE are not simply expressions of approbation, but contain invaluable promises. They are made in the language of the old testament, but to those blessed with gospel light, their meaning is not obscure or difficult. The promise secured the continuance of this family, and a succession of men of piety and virtue in it as long as God's people continued—They should *never want a man to stand before the Lord*—to serve him. That family had no office at the temple, but in a course of regular devotion, they stood before God, to minister unto him. This should continue—they should remain a religious family. Men of piety should always be found among them.

WHEN the prophet had laid theſe matters before the Jews, he made the application, and denounced the judgments of God againſt them, unleſs they turned by repentance. "Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Go, and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem—Will ye not receive inſtruction to hearken to my words? Saith the Lord. The words of Jonadab, the ſon of Rechab, that he commanded his ſons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: Notwithſtanding I have ſpoken unto you, riſing early and ſpeaking; but ye hearkened not unto me."

THE prophet then proceeded to remind them of the warnings which had been given them, and the means which had been uſed with them, and to denounce the judgments of God againſt them—"Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of Iſrael, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, all the evil that I have pronounced againſt them; becauſe I have ſpoken unto them, but they have not heard; and have called unto them, but they have not anſwered."

IF we conſider the ſtate of that people, and the advantages which they had neglected and abuſed, we ſhall be convinced that their guilt was attended ed with many aggravations—no other people had ſo many advantages and means of information; and few beſide were equally depraved."

THE family of Rechab might riſe up againſt them and condemn them. That family had been

long obedient to a man like themſelves—the Jews had been diſobedient to the God who is above. Jonadab was dead—if his deſcendants diſregarded his injunctions, he might have no power to puniſh their diſobedience; but the God of Iſrael lived—was acquainted with all their crimes, and able to puniſh their ſin upon them. Neither doth it appear that the Rechabites had ever been reminded of the orders of their progenitor, or their obligation to obey him; but the Jews had been often reminded of their duty; in the ſtated, and ordinary means of grace they were daily reminded of their obligation to obey God; and he had alſo ſent all his ſervants the prophets, to call them to repentance; neither had God required ſuch ſelf denials of his people, as Jonadab of his poſterity—yet Jonadab had been obeyed, and God had been diſobeyed! His people "would not receive inſtruction." Therefore were his judgments executed upon them, agreeably to his threatenings; and they are left on record for our inſtruction. "Now theſe things happened unto them for enſamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

REFLECTIONS.

I. In the part acted by the father of the Rechabites, we witneſs the concern of a good man, that his children ſhould mind the things of religion. That good man did not ſcruple to lay heavy burdens on his deſcendants, and cut them off from many temporal enjoyments, if it might ſerve to keep them humble, and cauſe them *to ſtand be-*

fore the Lord. He choſe rather to have his family poor, than to have them proud and vicious.—Hardſhips which might ſerve to keep them mindful of their ſituation here, he judged advantageous: Therefore the charge he left with them.

PIOUS parents do not generally leave ſuch things in charge to their children. They do not, however, neglect the concerns of religion, or leave their families ignorant of them, or their obligation to regard them. They teach them to fear the Lord, and live in all good conſcience before him.

II. IN the hiſtorical ſketch here given of the Rechabites, we ſee how good people of old, were influenced by parental authority—how they conſidered themſelves bound to remember and obey the injunctions of religious anceſtors, as they wiſhed the bleſſing of God. Where ſuch injunctions are diſregarded it is an evidence of great depravity.

SAD inſtances of this kind we ſometimes witneſs in this degenerate age. We ſometimes ſee godly parents, who had labored before in vain to render their children truely religious, ſpend their laſt hours in urging them not to receive the grace of God in vain—ſee them with deep concern, and with their dying breath, charging them to mind the things of religion, and not reſt until they have found the Savior. Though at firſt ſome impreſſion ſeems to be made, it often ſoon wears off, and the warnings and counſels of thoſe who loved them as their own ſouls, are forgotten and neglected!

COULD theſe things be foreſeen, ſenſe of duty would only extort ſuch admonitions from a pious parent, at the ſolemn period of his departure; for like a neglected goſpel, they are "a ſavor of death unto death," to thoſe who hear them!

BUT this is not always the caſe. No means have a more direct and powerful tendency to awaken the ſecure, and excite the attention of the careleſs, than the dying concern and counſel of the ſaints. Perhaps no other means are oftener bleſſed to this end. This leads us to obſerve,

III. THAT the part we act here may have conſequences, long after we ſhall have gone off the ſtage. This venerable Kenite left a ſolemn charge to his poſterity; but who could foreſee the effect? There was little reaſon to expect that his deſcendants would regard it, and be advantaged by it for centuries; yet it ſeems to have been the caſe! His counſels, ſtrengthened by his example, made an indelible impreſſion, and were means of diſtinguiſhing his family for many generations!

THIS ſhould encourage others to follow his example—to charge their children to "keep the way of the Lord, and walk in his ordinances and commandments blameleſs." Who knows that his poſterity may not imitate thoſe of this man of God? And for as long a term? Who can determine that his good example, and counſels may not do good on earth, when his body ſhall be mouldering in the grave, and his ſoul rejoicing in the preſence of his God."

ON the other hand, there is more than equal reaſon to expect that a parent's bad example will be no leſs extenſively influential to miſchief. Many are ſeduced to their ruin by the contagion of evil example; nor is any other more perniciouſly prevalent than that of a parent, or progenitor.

BE it then the concern of all who fear the Lord to charge their children to fear him, and to ſet them the example of "ſtanding before the Lord." So to do, is to ſow the ſeeds of virtue and piety. A harveſt may follow, even after expectation hath failed. If no other advantage accrues, the faithful will deliver his own ſoul; he may be the occaſion of delivering others; of "converting ſinners from the error of their ways; ſaving ſouls from death, and hiding multitudes of ſins."*

IV. THE honorable mention made of the Rechabites, and the bleſſings promiſed them, ſhould influence children to liſten to the pious counſels of their parents, and attend the duties which *they* conſider important, and charge them to attend, eſpecially at the cloſe of life.

THAT the godly when on the verge of eternity, are divinely influenced to warn their friends, and predict the good or evil before them, was an opinion which prevailed among the ancients. Therefore the ſacred attention paid to their dying words, and ſcrupulous regard of their dying counſels. Whether we admit, or reject the ſentiment, the

* James v. 19, 20.

counſels which are given at ſuch ſeaſons are ſerious, ſolemn, and the effect of love unfeigned. Thoſe to whom they are given commonly view matters in the ſame light, and conſider them as intereſting realities, when they come to be themſelves in ſimilar circumſtances.

HAVE our pious anceſtors left ought in charge to us? It concerns us to conſider their counſels and injunctions; and unleſs we have clear and ſtrong reaſons forbidding, we are bound to obey them.

CHILDREN are uſually ſafe in following the laſt counſels of their parents. Few who ſuſtain that endearing relation, are devoid of concern for the honor and happineſs of their offspring. However they may have themſelves conducted, while in the purſuit of worldly objects, or under the influence of appetite or paſſion, when they come to ſtand on the brink of another world, the faſcinating charms of this, loſe their power—the infinite difference between time and eternity appears; and the true value of objects is ſeen and eſtimated. Then the counſel which is given is that of wiſdom—it points to duty—to peace and honor—to joy and glory.

IT is further obſervable that rich promiſes are made in ſcripture to thoſe who honor and obey their parents, and dreadful curſes denounced againſt thoſe who deſpiſe and diſobey them. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayeſt live long upon the earth. This is the firſt commandment with promiſe. The eye that mocketh at his father, and de-

ſpiſeth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it." Theſe ſcriptures are not of private interpretation.

V. WHERE the bleſſing of heaven hath long reſted on a family, and religion been prevalent in it for many generations, the right way becomes comparatively eaſy. Thoſe born there, grow up in the fear of God, and are early taught to know and ſerve him. But how aggravated the guilt of thoſe who under ſuch circumſtances forſake the way of the Lord—cut of the entail of mercy and entail a curſe on their poſterity—ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt their own offspring; neither going in themſelves, nor ſuffering thoſe who are entering to go in?

LOST to the fear of God, ſuch hardened ſinners may cry peace, but there is no peace to them! It concerns them to look to themſelves, for evil is before them! A deſcent from pious anceſtors will not turn away the wrath of God, from thoſe who harden themſelves in ſin. No—It increaſeth their guilt and will increaſe their condemnation. The Jews flattered themſelves "becauſe they had Abraham to their father; but many came from the eaſt and from the weſt and ſet down with Abraham in the kingdom of God, and the children of the kingdom were caſt out"—Yea, having filled up the meaſure of their ſins, wrath came upon them, to the uttermoſt, in this world; and in that to come, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha than for them.

SERMON XXIV.

The Character and Supports of Widows indeed.

1 TIMOTHY v. 5.

*Now she that is a Widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.**

TIMOTHY was ordained a bishop of the church at Ephesus; and this epistle was written to him by St. Paul, his spiritual father, to teach him "how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God."

THE former part of the context contains directions respecting the treatment of widows; and especially poor widows who belonged to the church, and were supported at their expense. He is first directed to "honor widows who were widows indeed." Here the apostle explains his meaning, by designating the character intended. *Now "she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God,*

* Preached at the house of one made a widow by her husband's desertion; who left her in straitened circumstances to provide for a young family.

and continueth in ſupplications and prayers night and day."

EVERY widow did not anſwer to this deſcription. There were ſome who anſwered to no part of it, as he ſhews below. Theſe Timothy was not required to honor—not directed to provide for them, or employ them in the buſineſs of the church; though certain poor and pious women were then uſed to miniſter to the ſick, of their own ſex, and diſcharge other charitable labors among them.

IN diſcourſing on our ſubject, we ſhall *make a few obſervations on the ſorrows of widowhood; then glance at the duties of it; and the ſupports which God hath provided for widows indeed.*

A WIDOWED ſtate is naturally deſolate. Moſt widows paſs many ſolitary hours—a loneſome and melancholy ſituation;—eſpecially after having known and enjoyed the ſocial intercourſe of connubial life. The value of all our comforts is beſt known by experience; more eſpecially by their loſs, after a temporary poſſeſſion.

BUT the conjugal connexion is ſometimes unhappy. In ſuch caſes a widowed ſtate is a releaſe from the trials and difficulties which attended it, which may be ſevere and diſtreſſing. The miſconduct, or unkindneſs of thoſe in the neareſt relation, wounds in the tendereſt part, and occaſions the moſt pungent grief. True.—Yet a ſtate of widowhood, after ſuch a connexion, is commonly more unhappy than after a happy marriage. Many diſagreeables are generally left to afflict the def-

olate. Reflections on such connexions and the trying scenes passed while they continued, are disagreeable; and many cares peculiar to their situation often distress the widows. The care of offspring, where there are offspring, devolves wholly on them; which, if left in straitened circumces, is often a burden they are unable to bear. And where aid is kindly afforded, still the concern which lies on them, is oft times distressing. "Pangs and sorrows take hold upon them—their couch is wet with tears; their eyes consumed with grief." If those thus tried are *widows indeed*, they follow the line drawn in the text—*trust in God, and continue in prayers and supplications night and day.*

As it is the duty, it is also the comfort and support of *the desolate to trust in God.* When streams dry up, we go to the fountain: So when creature comforts fail, interest unites with duty, in pointing us to the Creator. He is the source of comfort—that which comes by means of the creature comes from him. The creature is only the medium of conveyance.

WHEN the saints become desolate—when their worldly comforts fail and their hopes decay, they are directed to return to God and put their trust in him; and also to bring with them, those for whom they feel interested—their helpless dear ones, and he hath promised them protection. "Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me."

FALLEN creatures are exceedingly prone to lean to the world—to promise themselves comfort in it,

and support from it. They generally look elsewhere before they look to God. Disappointed in one worldly object they often run to another, and another. They never come to the Creator, and make him their hope, till convinced that what they seek is not to be found in the creature. God sometimes brings his people into straits, and strips them of their earthly dependencies, that having no where else to trust they may come to him and cast their care upon him.

EVEN the Christian may need the rod of adversity to keep him mindful of his dependence on God, and prevent his resting on the creature for support. For after union with Christ, worldly objects retain too large a share of his affection, and he is too much inclined to lean upon them. His attachment to these things is often too strong; draws away his heart from God, and renders him too little mindful of him who is his portion and rest. Therefore is it often necessary to deprive him of his earthly dependencies, that being desolate, he may return to God and renew his reliance on him.

IT becomes the desolate, not only to trust in God, but to be thankful that they may trust in him. Those who have God for their portion, have an abiding satisfying portion. God will be more and better to them than earthly friends, or earthly treasures. Friends often forsake them; or cease to be friends, and become enemies—"Riches take to themselves wings and fly away." But God abides;

he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee."*

NOW *ſhe that is a widow indeed, and deſolate, while ſhe truſteth in God continueth in ſupplications and prayers night and day.*

THOSE of this character when they find themſelves deſtitute of worldly comforts and ſupports, go to God and pour out their ſouls into his boſom. Like the Pſalmiſt they ſtir up themſelves to truſt in him. We find that ſaint expoſtulating with himſelf in a time of trouble and darkneſs, and chiding his deſpondent temper. "Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? And why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

WHILE thus ſtirring up themſelves to truſt in God, the ſaints pour out their ſouls before him in fervent prayer. This the apoſtle declares to be the manner of thoſe, whom he terms *widows indeed—they truſt in God, and continue in ſupplications and prayers night and day.*

SUCH was the aged Anna, who met the infant Savior, "when he was brought into the temple, to do for him after the cuſtom of the law. "She departed not from the temple, but ſerved God, with faſtings and prayers night and day."

THE child, when in affliction, is wont to run to its parents and tell them the ſad tale of its ſorrows. So the child of God, ſtripped of other ſupports, ſpreads its grief before him who poſſeſſes all pow-

* Hebrews xiii. 5.

er, and is able to deliver out of all diſtreſſes: And as the child continues its cries and pleadings with its parent, as long as its ſorrows continue; ſo the child of God, while it remains in affliction, perſeveres in ſupplications and prayers to its Father in heaven.

WHEN ſeeking temporal bleſſings the good man aſks with ſubmiſſion, "Not as I will but as thou wilt"—teach me to acquieſce in thy dealings and to ſay "thy will be done." But when ſeeking ſpiritual bleſſings, he cannot be too importunate, or perſevering. Reſpecting theſe, the divine glory, unites with his intereſt, in requiring him to "be inſtant in prayer—to pray and not faint." O-, to uſe the bold language of the prophet, to reſolve to "give God no reſt," till he hears and helps. In ſuch caſes the ſaints may plead God's honor and the glory of his great name, as well as their own neceſſities.

WHEN we come to aſk mercy of God, and to pray for grace to love and ſerve him, we may plead and expoſtulate for the beſtowment. Is it not thy will, that we ſhould be renewed and ſanctified—that we ſhould repent of ſin—believe the goſpel, and follow after holineſs? Is it not thy will that we ſhould become new creatures—love thee—love our duty, and reſign ourſelves to thy diſpoſal? Is it not thy will, that we ſhould act with propriety under every trial, and diſcharge with faithfulneſs every duty—that we ſhould honor thee in adverſity, as well as in proſperity? Grant us then thoſe divine influences which are neceſſary for us. The

honor of thy great name is concerned—it unites with our neceſſities in requiring the beſtowment of the mercies which we aſk."

THUS did Moſes when pleading for Iſrael, when God had threatened to deſtroy them for their rebellions againſt him. "Now if thou kill this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, ſhall ſpeak ſaying, Becauſe the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he ſware unto them, therefore hath he ſlain them in the wilderneſs—pardon, I beſeech thee, the ſin of this people, according to the greatneſs of thy mercy"—So Joſhua, on a ſimilar occaſion: His plea in their behalf is urged from this conſideration, that the honor of God was concerned, and required the mercy which he implored—"What wilt thou do unto thy great name? What? If Iſrael turn their backs before their enemies? If thy people fail to drive out their enemies and poſſeſs the land which thou haſt ſworn to give them?"

WE may uſe the ſame argument when interceding for the grace which we need to enable us to glorify God by a becoming temper and conduct under trials, and by a ſuitable improvement of providential diſpenſations; and it will be our beſt plea, or moſt prevalent argument.

WE may meet with diſcouragements—God may ſeem deaf to our cries—to delay his mercy; but if we "pray and faint not," he will not always ſay to us, nay. He will hear and help us. For his own name's ſake he will do it.

WHEN the woman of Canaan aſked mercy for her daughter, no encouragement was given to her firſt petition—the reply ſeemed harſh—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and caſt it to dogs." But ſhe perſevered, and her faith and fervor prevailed. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." The ſame will be the anſwer to every humble ſuppliant for ſpiritual mercies, and for divine ſupports, who perſeveres in his addreſſes at the throne of grace.

RESPECTING temporal matters, we know not what to pray for as we ought—know not what is beſt for us. Afflictions may be mercies. They often are ſo. Some have bleſſed God for them here; more will probably do it hereafter. That they do not uſually denote want of love in God, is manifeſt from the declarations of his word—"Whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. If ye endure chaſtening, God dealeth with you as with ſons—if ye are without chaſtiſement, then are ye baſtards and not ſons." Thoſe were determined ſinners, given over to reprobation, of whom God ſaid, "Why ſhould ye be ſtricken any more! Ye will revolt more and more."

WHEN afflictions ſerve to purge away ſin—to "purify and make white," they are changed into mercies. Inſtead of complaining, we have reaſon to bleſs God for them. This hath often happened. Afflictions arreſt the attention—lead to conſideration, and reclaim from error. "Before I was afflicted, I went aſtray, but now I keep thy word."

PROSPERITY hath often a different effect. To the wicked it is frequently fatal in its consequences; here they have their good things, and they rest in them, forgetful of God, and the other world which they must soon enter, to receive according to their works. Neither do the people of God always escape injury when they attain the things they here desire. The prosperity we covet is more dangerous than the adversity we dread. Few can bear prosperity—few remain long uncorrupted in a prosperous state. A state so difficult and dangerous is seldom long the state of the righteous. It is more commonly the state of the wicked. The righteous have their trials here; and this kind of trial, [prosperity] hath more often seduced them, than its opposite. David and Solomon were sad examples of the baleful effects of power and greatness, riches and honor; but they were brought back to God and duty by the rod of disappointment—by the correctings of affliction.

ADVERSITY is not always productive of good. Some repine at the orders of providence—at their lot in the world. Trials sour their minds and render them morose and peevish. We read of some who "blaspheme the God of heaven" because of their sufferings. These are enemies of God, and their sufferings here, are a prelude to greater sufferings hereafter. The case is different with those who have Christ's spirit; they see a providence in whatever they meet with here; refer themselves to him who rules over all to choose for them, and order out their changes, not doubt-

ing but his grace will be sufficient for them, and all work for their good.

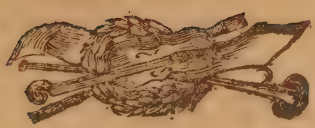
WE are sure that God orders wisely. The station then, which he assigns to us, is most suitable for us; the comforts and corrections which he dispenses, most fit and proper. If wise for ourselves we would not wish for alterations in them. We shall only be concerned to follow where God leads, and only pray that he will not leave us, but guide us to his kingdom.

LET us bring home these considerations, and inquire how *we* are affected by God's dealings with us, and what temper we maintain? We have comforts and corrections. Do we see the hand of God in them; acknowledge the comforts to be undeserved, and the corrections less than our demerits? Do we bless God for the former, and humble ourselves under the latter? Or do the former render us forgetful of God, and proud and scornful towards men? Do the latter humble and abase us; keep us mindful that this is not our rest, and quicken our preparations for that world where all tears will be wiped away from our eyes? Or do they cause us to murmur and repine, as though we suffered unjustly?

BOTH mercies and afflictions will be a savor of life or death, according to the effect which they have upon us, and the temper and disposition they produce in us. If mercies increase our love to God, and concern to honor him, then are they mercies indeed. So are afflictions, if they humble us and quicken us in the way of duty; but if

their effect is different they increaſe our guilt, and will increaſe our condemnation.

WHATEVER may be our ſituation here—whether we have kind and faithful friends, or are left deſolate, or are ſurrounded with enemies; whether we have joys or ſorrows, we need the divine influence to enable us to make a good improvement, and to render them the occaſion of good. We need divine aid and influence, no leſs in proſperity than in adverſity. Whatever, therefore, may be our ſituation and circumſtances, ſenſible of our weakneſs and blindneſs, let us return to God as our reſt, *truſt in him, and continue in ſupplications and prayers night and day;* and his grace will be ſufficient for us; for he hath ſaid to none "ſeek ye my face in vain."



SERMON XXV.

The Good Man Useful in Life and Happy in Death.

PSALM xxxvii. 37.

*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: For the end of that man is peace.**

THE ſubject of this pſalm is the way and end of the righteous and the wicked. It is deſigned to calm the minds of good people when tried with adverſity, and to reconcile them to the divine adminiſtration in the unequal diſtributions of Providence, and the apparent diſregard of character, in thoſe diſtributions. With theſe views, the writer, after glancing at the lives of ſaints and ſinners, calls our attention to their end, noting the manner of their exit out of life.

THE text relates to the righteous. In diſcourſing upon it, *We ſhall conſider the excellence of their characters, and their peaceful end; and add a few reflections.*

* Preached at the Funeral of Aſa Witter, Eſq. Oct. 9th, 1792.

I. WE *are to consider the excellence of their characters. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright.*—

THE *perfect man.*—This may seem a strange representation of an imperfect creature—a creature which viewed in the glass of the divine law appears deformed, and tried by the perfect rule must be condemned—a creature whose best services can find acceptance with God, only on the plan of grace! For such is man since the apostacy—such the saints feel and confess themselves. But however strange the representation, it is drawn by the pen of inspiration, and applied to the saints.

PERFECTION is sometimes attributed to particular saints. "Noah was a just man and *perfect* in his generation." Similar is the description given of Job. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job: And that man was *perfect* and upright."

IN the text, the term *perfect*, hath not a particular reference, but refers generally, to those who have been renewed by divine grace. But when applied to a fallen creature it must be understood with limitation. We have seen it applied to Job: Hear him then speaking of himself—"If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am *perfect* it shall prove me perverse."

ST. JOHN held a high rank among the faithful; yet speaking of the saints, and including himself, he observes—"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to for-

give our sins.* St. Paul had before declared that "there is none righteous, and that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin."

IN what sense then are the saints *perfect?* And wherein consists the excellence of their character?

1. THE saints are *perfect* in Christ. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." His righteousness is made theirs. "They are complete in him. He is made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." In this view every good man is a *perfect* man.

THE saints before the gospel day were but very partially instructed respecting the way of salvation. They knew not how they were to be saved through a Redeemer who had not come in the flesh. But the matter was open to the divine eye. And it is observable that the term *perfect* is never assumed by the saints. They confess their own emptiness and abase themselves before God. Where perfection is attributed to them, it is always by those who spake as moved by the Holy Ghost.

2. THE saints are the subjects not only of an imputed, but also of an inherent righteousness: And have been so from the beginning. "Noah was a just man and *perfect*—Job *perfect* and upright. In this respect they were not made to differ from other saints. All the saints are born of God—they are renewed after the image of the Creator and made to bear the image of the heavenly. The change which takes place in them caus-

* 1 John i. 8—10.

es them to favor the things of God; to love holiness, and delight to do good as they have opportunity and ability.

THEY are just and upright; just toward man, and upright before God.

JUSTICE respects the part which mankind act toward one another. It is opposed to fraud and injustice. The just man is fair in his dealings—gives to all their dues—is careful to fulfil every trust, and to do by others as he would others should do by him.

SUCH is the character given of him of old, who "was *perfect* in his generations," when "the whole earth was filled with violence, because all flesh had corrupted their way." And every good man follows his example; hath respect to all God's commandments, and hates every evil way. Perfection, in the strict sense of the term, is his wish and his aim, though he doth not expect to attain it while resident in the body. But he "forgets the things which are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, he presses on," endeavoring a nearer conformity to the divine pattern.

WHILE he is just toward man, he is sincere toward God, acting uprightly before him. He is really the good man he appears. His profession is not dissembled. His heart is right—his eye single. Sincerity is gospel perfection. In this true religion very essentially consists: And it is found on all the saints.

THE good man keeps in mind his covenant engagements. For the vows of God are upon him

and he is careful to fulfil them. He doth not wish to be released from his obligations with which he is bound to be the Lord's and to serve him. He is concerned to honor God—thinks nothing unimportant which he hath required, though the reasons of the requirement may lie out of sight. "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" is his daily inquiry. And he seeks to know, that he may do his duty. He waits on God in the ways of his appointment, and is busy about the work assigned him. He is also steady in his counsels and uniform in his conduct. His heart is established by grace, and his life accords with the inward principle. He is not whiffling and unsteady, "carried about by every wind of doctrine" —taken and drawn away by every new scheme of religion; but "holds fast the faithful word; and is able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince gainsayers." He doth not "put his hand to the plough and look back," but perseveres to the end, and is faithful unto death. The fear and love of God reigning in his heart, govern his life and direct his way, rendering him an uniform character. Therefore do those most intimately acquainted with him, convinced of his integrity—that he is free from duplicity, and that he abhors evil, and all approaches toward it, both value him themselves, and make him known to others; and by bringing him into public view, render him a public blessing. Neither doth he disappoint their expectations, but according to his ability, acquits himself with honor, and doth good to all around him.

OTHERS may differ from him in ſpeculative opinions; other good men. Such differences are unavoidable in this ſtate of darkneſs and uncertainty. No two perſons ſee alike in every thing, whatever may be pretended. But thoſe who know *the perfect and upright man*, will generally allow that he acts ſincerely towards God and man. While thoſe who are connected with him by tender ties, who are ſo happy as to make with him the journey of life, are led by a thouſand kind offices and nameleſs acts of benevolence and goodneſs to revere and love him.

SUCH is the character intended in the text—Such the *perfect man and upright* in himſelf, and in the eſtimation of thoſe who know him. Thus doth he paſs through life, feeling and confeſſing his deficiencies, lamenting that he can do no more for God's honor, and relying on grace alone in Chriſt, for acceptance with him.

WHEN a perſon of this deſcription "having ſerved his generation, by the will of God falls aſleep," not only relatives and near connexions, but all who know his worth, mourn his exit, and weeping around his corſe, bedew his hearſe with tears. His name is revered, his memory is bleſſed, and even envy is ſilent.

II. WE are to conſider his peaceful end—*The end of that man is peace.*

BY a perſon's *end*, his death, the period of his mortal life is intended. It doth not intend the *end* of his exiſtence—the modern infidel terms uſed to expreſs death. So in other ſcriptures; as

when God foretold the destruction of the old world—"The end of all flesh is before me." So Balaam, when looking forward to his exit out of life—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last *end* be like his." Had death been the period of his existence, it would have been a matter of indifference whether it found him righteous or wicked. As to hope in death there would have been no difference. But this is not the case. Man hath an immortal part within. At the period of mortal life, he enters on an interminable state.

Mark *the perfect man, and behold the upright: For the end of that man is peace.* He finds peace at the approach of death—in death, and after death. In order to a due estimation of the value of true religion in itself, and in its reward, we are here called to observe the good man's *end*. It demands our careful attention. For the scene is peculiarly instructive. It animates to a discharge of the duties of life, and supports under its troubles; especially at the approach of death, when worldly comforts fly away.

The wicked who live in habitual neglect of religion, or the indulgence of vicious desires, are commonly filled with dismay and horror, if reason remains, when they perceive their *end* draw nigh. The slights which they have cast on the gospel, and on the grace therein offered; their neglects of known duty; their acts of injustice, intemperance, uncleanness, or other immoralities, the remembrance of which were almost obliterated by time, at that awful period rise up before them! Conscience

awakes; and when they conſider the denunciations of divine wrath againſt thoſe who do ſuch things, and have pleaſure in them, fear harrows up their ſouls! They anticipate eternal woe, and are filled with agonizing horror! Then do they appear all hurry and confuſion! The great work of life to do, and opportunity gone forever! Bewailing paſt madneſs they cry undone! Undone! Such often continues their ſtate, till the king of terrors driving them away without hope, ſhuts up the ſcene!

BUT *the perfect and upright man*, how happily different when death draws near? If poſſeſſed of himſelf, like the ſtill ſummer's evening, he is calm and ſerene. He talks of death with as much compoſure, as one returning from a ſtrange country, to his native land; or as one returning from captivity and ſlavery, to his father's houſe, to his family, and to the ſociety of friends, dear as life, and with much more raiſed expectations!

SOME ties of nature—dear connexions, bind him indeed to earth, and would detain him here; but ſtronger bonds allure and draw him away toward a better world. If concern for dear ones he muſt leave behind intrudes and tempts him to wiſh a longer ſtay, he remembers that though he dies, his God lives—that God hath ſtiled himſelf the "Father of the fatherleſs and judge of the widow;" that he hath ſaid "Leave thy fatherleſs children with me, I will preſerve them alive, and let thy widows truſt in me." Supported by ſuch comforting declarations—ſuch kind promiſes of a faith-

ful God, and the assured belief of his mercy and truth, he resigns them to his care and leaves them with him, not doubting, but he will preserve them, or dispose of them, as shall be most for his own glory, and their good.

As to temporal matters, which often trouble those, who are chiefly concerned about worldly things, they cannot greatly affect one who believes himself heir to an eternal inheritance. For the comfort of those whom he leaves behind, he wishes to have his temporalities settled, and his accompts intelligible; that no disputes may arise, no injustice be done; but as to any concern which he personally takes in them, they appear in his view contemptible. He views them as unworthy his regard, as the beggar, who hath been called to the possession of a crown the rags which he casts off to put on his robes.

As death approacheth, *the perfect and upright* man, who realizeth his state, looks back with comfort, approving the part he hath acted, after renovation, and forward to the enjoyment of God, with stedfast hope and strong consolation.

WE have this happiness of a dying saint, exemplified in St. Paul—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."—His rejoicing was "the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, he had had

his converſation in the world." In the teſtimony of his conſcience, he read the evidence of his good eſtate—of his ſincerity towards God, and of his intereſt in Chriſt. He viewed nothing which he had done as meritorious—as laying God under obligation. Grace in Chriſt was all his hope. But he conſidered his love to God, and his zeal in his cauſe, as evidential that he was born of God, and the ſubject of divine grace in the Redeemer. Thence he inferred his title to the inheritance, prepared of God for thoſe who love him.

OTHER ſaints do the ſame. In the teſtimony of conſcience that they love God, and have obtained grace to ſerve him, they read their intereſt in the covenant and in the promiſes, in all their divine fulneſs.

THIS is the beſt, yea, the only evidence, of an intereſt in them. Where this is found, the matter is determined; there can be no reaſonable doubt of their good eſtate; but where it is wanting, every thing beſide is of no avail.

IT is natural for a ſervant, when he ſees a reckoning day at hand, to look back, and inquire how he hath improved his truſt, and what account he hath to give? And from the teſtimony of conſcience, he anticipates the reception he may expect from his lord.

MANKIND feel themſelves accountable to God and naturally expect to receive from his impartial hand, according to their works; and when they perceive their probation drawing to a cloſe, they

naturally look about them, and inquire how they can appear before their Judge?

THE dying Christian is sometimes heard observing to those about him—"My glass is almost run. Would to God I had been more faithful, and done more for him who loved me, and gave himself for me. But blessed be his name, he hath enabled me to choose him for my portion, and enabled me to serve him in sincerity; though I have done it with much weakness and imperfection. Now I rely on his grace; his grace will be sufficient for me; it will support me in death, and reward my poor services with an eternal reward."

BUT if conscience, as death approacheth, speaks a different language—If it testifies to a departing soul—"You have neglected the great salvation—lived in pleasure and been wanton, minding only earthly things," it fills the soul with anguish unutterable, causing it to anticipate eternal horrors!

THE *perfect and upright*, as he rejoiceth at the approach of death, if reason remains, often rejoiceth in death. "When he walks the dark valley, God's rod and staff comfort him—He fears no evil because God is with him." He is sometimes, ready to exclaim in the triumphant language of the resurrection, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?"

SOMETIMES indeed, the upright, while here, "walk in darkness"—Sometimes the lamp of reason goes out, before the departure of the soul; so that the dying Christian hath no sense of his situation. At other times, God may hide his face

from thoſe whom his ſoul loves, and cauſe them to go on their way ſorrowing. Poſſibly this may continue to the cloſe of life! But if it doth, the clouds are all diſperſed at the moment of death. No ſooner are the clayey tabernacles diſſolved, than the veil is rent, and the brightneſs of celeſtial glory ſhines in upon them. Peace eternal and divine, is theirs forever. Clouds will no more hide God's face—Fears and doubts, no more diſtreſs them; nor Satan caſt his fiery darts at them again forever.

IN the other world, God will dwell with his people, and "wipe away all tears from their eyes: There will be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; for the former things will all have paſſed away. There will be no more curſe, becauſe no more ſin. For the ſpirits of the juſt will be made perfect." They will then be with God and rejoice before him; for they will have "entered into his temple to go no more out."

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE conſiderations which have been ſuggeſted afford comfort to the righteous, while groaning under the burdens and ſorrows of life, and ſupport in the ſolemn hour of death. They miniſter conſolation alſo to thoſe who mourn the loſs of pious friends—an occaſion of ſorrow which we often experience in this vale of tears.

HERE all have trials and afflictions—*the perfect and upright* not excepted. But the time is ſhort. The good man's trouble terminates with mortal life. *His end is peace*—his immortality glorious.

The wicked are dismayed when they look forward and consider their end, or the time of their departure. To the good man it is desirable—"He then rests from his labors, and his works follow him." St. Paul, "had a desire to depart, and be with Christ." He knew that "a crown of righteousness was laid up for him, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him at that day." This was not peculiar to him; it is common to all those "who love Christ's appearing." Those now in glory were lately sufferers here: But their sufferings are ended—"They have entered into peace: They rest in their beds, walking in their uprightness."

II. Our subject teacheth the conditions on which only we can hope for peace in death, and happiness after death. These depend on the use which we make of life—on the manner in which we are affected by the overtures made us in the gospel; they are the fruit of receiving Christ and obeying the gospel; for it brings salvation only to those who obey it.

Would we "die the death of the righteous, and have our last end like his," our lives must be preparatory—we must "mind the things which belong to our peace—live in all good conscience before God, and not suffer ourselves to be moved away from the hope of the gospel."

III. Then when "the mystery of God shall be finished, his judgments will be made manifest;" hitherto, "his way is in the sea, and his judgments are a great deep." We know that his way

is perfect; but witneſs many things in the divine adminiſtration, which we do not underſtand. We have no line to fathom the depths of providence.

OFTEN *the perfect and the upright* are early removed out of life—thoſe who are friends of religion, and ſupporters of order and juſtice; whoſe hearts are filled with benevolence—who are the excellent of the earth! While thoſe of different characters, who we ſhould ſuppoſe might well be ſpared, yea, whoſe removal, we ſhould judge a mercy to the world, are left to prolong their days! Some who are early vicious, and daily grow worſe, are nevertheleſs continued, and permitted to diſhonor God, and ſpread error and miſchief among mankind, till at "an hundred years old they die accurſed!"

SUCH events often occur, and under the divine adminiſtration! They are permitted of him who cannot miſtake! In a ſenſe, they are the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes!"

"THE Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice—Clouds and darkneſs are round about him: Righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Wait on the Lord: Be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thine heart; wait, I ſay, on the Lord."

SERMON XXVI.

Departed Saints Fellowservants with those yet on Earth.

REVELATION xxii. 9.

I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets.

THE revelation made to St. John in the isle of Patmos, was a comfort to the suffering apostle, and a blessing to the church. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." The beginning indeed was dark; the prophetic sketch, was for sometime, gloomy: It unfolded a strange scene of declensions and abominations, which were to disgrace the church of Christ and mar its beauty; and a dismal series of woes on woes, for many ages. The church, then so pure, was to be corrupted, to become "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, and to make herself drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus!" When the apostle "saw, he wondered with great

admiration." Had the vision closed with similar discoveries, no joy would have been occasioned by them; but grief ineffable. The apostle might have sunk under them. But they finally appeared diverse, and adapted to comfort him, and fill his heart with joy. He saw the cause of Christ triumphant—true religion to have become universal, and heavenly glory the reward of the faithful!

WHEN the veil which had been spread over these things was drawn aside, and they broke out to the view of this man of God, he seems to have been enraptured and lost in ecstacy. He prostrated himself in adoration of the celestial messenger: But was forbidden by the angel—"See thou do it not; I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.—Worship God." This happened at the beginning of the joyful part of the vision, when the triumphs of Christianity were first disclosed.*

WE are under no temptation to give undue honors to bearers of evil tidings: But even "the feet of those who bring good tidings are beautiful."

THE angel having thus restrained the apostle from paying him divine homage, proceeded to finish the sketch which he had begun of the glory which remains for the people of God. When it was nearly completed, the still imbodied saint, again forgot himself, and overcome by a sight too strong and glorious for frail humanity, fell down in humble adoration of the heavenly minister!

* Revelation xix. 10.

Mad with joy he appears to have been bewildered, and in a momentary delirium; but was again prevented by the angel; and the ſame reaſon aſſigned as before—*I am thy fellowſervant, and of thy brethren the prophets.*

THIS declaration is remarkable. How are we to underſtand it?

IT ſhould ſeem that this meſſenger from above was originally one of our race. *I am thy fellowſervant.*—

WE are inclined to believe that he had once inhabited a human body, and had his reſidence on earth—that this was one of the old prophets, who having been releaſed from the work to which he had been firſt called, was now ſerving God under another form, in a more dignified ſtation and with greater powers than he had poſſeſſed while yet on probation.

WE may miſtake the Scriptures; but have been induced to believe that when the ſaints drop theſe bodies, and are joined "to the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect," they become angels, and are afterwards employed in the ſervice of God, as his meſſengers and agents, whom he "ſends forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation," and to tranſact buſineſs for which he hath fitted them, and in which he is pleaſed to employ them.

SOME reaſons of this belief are adduced in the following diſcourſe.

WHEN a child of God is releaſed from the body, he is freed from the remains of depravity, and from his native bias to evil, and according to his nature,

made perfect in holineſs. His reaſon is retained; yea, his rational capacity is enlarged; and thoſe who are aſſociated with the bleſſed inhabitants of the upper world, doubtleſs enjoy better means of information than are to be found on earth.

SOME indeed, have fancied, that ſoul and body ſleep together from the epoch of death till the reſurrection! That during that term, the ſoul is chained down in a ſtate of inſenſibility! That the happineſs of the ſaints, during the intermediate term, is no other than a ſleep without dreams—a temporary nonexiſtence! Strange!

THE thoughts of death would make the good man tremble, did he conceive ſuch to be its nature. Here he is compaſſed with infirmity, and groans, being burdened. But ſuch an exiſtence, which capacitates him to do ſomewhat to honor God, and benefit man, is preferable to a ſuſpenſion of exiſtence.

SUSPENSION of exiſtence! What is a ſuſpenſion of exiſtence, but a temporary annihilation!—A complete ſoleciſm! From ſuch a ſtate there could be no reſurrection. There could be only another creation, which muſt conſtitute not the ſame, but another creature. The idea of a ſuſpenſion of exiſtence, is ſcarcely ſuppoſable; and the reality of it contradicted by every part of revelation.

DEATH is repreſented in the Scriptures, as a ſeparation of ſoul and body; not as their ſleeping together. "Thou changeſt his countenance, and *ſendeſt him away*;" is a deſcription of death drawn by Job—which anſwers to that given of Rachel's—

"*As her ſoul was in departing*, for ſhe died." And a reſurrection is repreſented as a return of the ſoul to the body from which it had been ſeparated: As of the widow's ſon whom Elijah raiſed from the dead—"*And the ſoul of the child came into him again*, and he revived." The language of the New Teſtament is the ſame. This day thou ſhalt be with me in paradiſe," was a promiſe made by our Savior to a penitent fellow ſufferer on the croſs, whoſe body was the ſame day committed to the grave. St. Paul "had a deſire *to depart* and to be with Chriſt," which he oppoſed to *abiding in the fleſh*." If ſoul and body ſleep together in the grave, he would have been no ſooner with Chriſt, than though he had lived here till the reſurrection. When St. John was indulged a ſight of heaven, he ſaw the ſouls of the martyrs who had been ſlain before that period, and heard them crying for vengeance on their murderers who were yet living on earth.*

THE Scriptures are ſo explicit reſpecting the ſtate of the dead, that a ſuſpicion that they remain ſenſeleſs while their bodies moulder in the duſt, appears ſtrange. The righteous dead certainly rejoice in God's preſence and are aſſociated with fellow ſaints. "The Lamb, which is in the midſt of the throne, feeds them, and leads them "to fountains of living waters; and God wipes away all tears from their eyes."

NEITHER do they remain inactive—"They ſerve God day and night—in his temple," ſome

* Revelation vi. 9, 10.

may ſay. God's temple may here mean the univerſe, that vaſt temple which he hath built; in every part of which his ſaints may ſerve him.*

SURELY the glorified ſpirit is not confined to a ſingle apartment in the houſe of God, and not ſuffered to go abroad, and ſee his glory, and the exerciſe of his perfections in the works of creation and providence! Were ſuch his ſituation, it would differ little from that of the delinquent who is confined to his cell, or priſon! Such cannot be the ſtate of a glorified ſoul—of a ſoul releaſed from a body, which while on trial, ſerved as a clog to reſtrain the ſervant, and prevent him from quitting the ſtation, in which he had been placed, or leaving the work aſſigned him. It cannot be the ſtate of one ſanctified throughout; of one raiſed above temptation, either to ſtray into devious paths, or be ſlothful in the ſervice of his God.

MUCH of our felicity here ariſeth from a contemplation of the works of creation and providence. In theſe we ſee divine wiſdom and goodneſs; learn to know God; to fear and love him. The good man carries this diſpoſition with him when he exchangeth worlds; his deſire of knowledge, and eſpecially the knowledge of God, and the works and ways of God. And is there not reaſon to believe that glorified ſaints have power and liberty to range among the works of the all perfect Sovereign; trace the evidences of the divine perfections, and witneſs their effects, and that this is one ſource of their happineſs?

* Revelation xxi. 22.

A RELISH for knowledge is a quality of the mind, natural to it, and inseparable from it. We observe it in children, who at an early period discover a desire of information, and perpetually seek it by questioning those more advanced. The same disposition is resident in adults, and productive of the attainments in science which both delight the mind and dignify the man. In heaven, the glorified spirit, hath doubtless advantages for attaining the knowledge of God and divine things, and opportunity to satisfy his desire after it, if it can be satisfied; for it is itself a happiness. It gives a zest to information, and will probably continue, and be an endless source of enjoyment. The creature may never know so much of God as to desire no farther knowledge of him; or so much of the works and ways of God, as to wish no increase of that knowledge. Acquisitions in knowledge and enjoyment may progress together in the world of spirits. And who can fix their limits? They may be as boundless as eternity!

TURN now your thoughts on Sir Isaac Newton, that renowned philosopher and Christian. Was his enlarged and inquisitive mind satisfied at death? Did not he carry with him a desire to visit every planet, not only of our own, but other systems, and pry into the *arcana* of nature to be found in them all?—If enabled and permitted, he may still be ranging among the works of God, to learn yet more of his wisdom, power and goodness, in his works and ways, which are unsearchable, and past the comprehension of created beings!

Probably other glorified ſpirits have a ſhare; it may be a large ſhare of the ſame temper.

AND if they are capable of bearing the meſſages of their divine Sovereign, or doing aught for his honor, it muſt be a pleaſure to glorified ſpirits to be ſo employed. Here the good man delights to ſerve the Lord. Will this ceaſe to be his diſpoſition when the remains of depravity ſhall be done away? Will not this diſpoſition be increaſed and ſtrengthened? Or is there reaſon to think that thoſe will have no power to ſerve God, who are freed from theſe ſluggiſh bodies?

OF certain glorified ſpirits it was declared to the apoſtle, as we have ſeen, that they "ſerve God day and night"—They have no need of reſt—they never grow weary. How they ſerve God without the uſe of bodily organs, is to us unknown. But it doth not follow that they are incapable of it. God can give them power, and teach them to accompliſh all his pleaſure.

THAT departed ſaints have ſometimes been ſent down to our world, to make known God's will, and deliver his meſſages, we believe to be taught in the ſcriptures—*I am thy fellowſervant, and of thy brethren the prophets.*

WHO not of our race could have made ſuch a declaration? *A fellowſervant,* is a ſervant of the ſame ſpecies, or rank. Our fellows are our equals; thoſe of the ſame claſs in creation. Brutes are creatures; but we do not conſider them as *fellowcreatures.* We might, however, with as much propriety as the angel could call himſelf John's

fellowſervant, had he belonged to another ſpecies, or claſs of ſervants.

THE term *prophet*, carries, in our apprehenſion, the ſame thing in it—ſpeaks the heavenly meſſenger to have been one of our race. By prophets, we underſtand inſpired men. We believe this to be every where its meaning in the ſcriptures. And the term *brethren—of thy brethren the prophets*, confirms our ſenſe of the text—*I am thy fellowſervant, and of thy brethren the prophets.* Strange language, if this was one of the angels who kept their firſt eſtate; one who never dwelt in fleſh, nor inhabited a human body! But if this was one of the old prophets, Samuel, Nathan, Daniel, or any other of thoſe who had tabernacled in fleſh, and been ſent to warn his brethren, and foretell things to come, the language is eaſy and natural.*

IF we ſearch the ſcriptures, we ſhall ſee that the ſaints whoſe bodies were in the grave, have been ſometimes thus uſed of God.

WHEN Saul went to conſult the powers of darkneſs, becauſe the Lord did not anſwer him in the time of his diſtreſs, Samuel, who had died ſome

* Συνδουλος σου γαρ ειμι, και των αδελφων σου των προφητων.

Doct. Doddridge in his notes on this paſſage obſerves, that it may be rendered *I am thy fellow ſervant, and* the fellow ſervant, *of thy brethren the prophets.*

But the tranſlation in the bible is perfectly literal. The ſentence is eliptical. The elipſis may as well be filled by τις, as by συνδουλος. If filled by the former, it reads thus, *I am thy fellow ſervant, and* one *of thy brethren the prophets.* This, for the reaſons given above we conceive to be the ſenſe of the paſſage. The learned reader will judge for himſelf.

time before, was ſent of God to reprove that rebellious prince, and denounce his doom.

SOME indeed ſuppoſe that the apparition was not Samuel, but an infernal! But the ſacred hiſtorian repreſents it as being Samuel, and why ſhould we reject his teſtimony?

THE ſorcereſs had not power by her charms, to call back the prophet from the world of ſpirits. But God had power to ſend him on his buſineſs; to enable him to make himſelf viſible, and foretel the evils which then hung over Saul and Iſrael: And from ſeveral conſiderations we think it evident that he did do it.

THE woman appears to have been ſurprized when ſhe ſaw Samuel. To her, he was an unexpected viſitor. By his means ſhe found out Saul, whom before ſhe did not know in his diſguiſe. —Apoſtate ſpirits if they ever gave reſponſes to thoſe who conſulted them, commonly flattered them in their crimes, or gave ambiguous anſwers to their inquiries; but not ſo the ghoſt which appeared on this occaſion. Moſt pointedly did it reprove the abandoned prince, who was adding iniquity to tranſgreſſion, and hardening himſelf in the time of trouble! And moſt expreſſly did it foretel the evils which were coming on the offending inquirer, his family and people! Could an apoſtate ſpirit have done theſe things? Or would he if he could? God hath ſometimes uſed wicked men to foretel future events, and compelled them to denounce his judgments; but have we any account of his making this uſe of

fallen angels? Of his making known his purposes to them, and enabling them to give the genuine proof of true prophets? It is further observable, that part of the message related to taking the kingdom from Saul, and giving it to David—"The Lord hath done to him as he spake by me," is his language. God had foretold this by Samuel; not by Satan, or a messenger of Satan.

THERE is every reason to believe that Samuel really appeared on this occasion—that God sent him to deliver the sad message to the impious rebel, who instead of humbling himself in the time of his trouble, sinned yet more against the Lord.

IF we attribute these divine communications to infernal agency, why not others? If once we turn aside from the literal sense of scripture, where shall we stop? But should we doubt whether in this instance, a departed saint was sent down to visit earth, and transact the business of HIM who is Lord of all, other instances may certainly be adduced—if not in the Old Testament, yet beyond a doubt in the New. But this will be the subject of another discourse.

SERMON XXVII.

Departed Saints Fellowservants with those yet on Earth.

REVELATION xxii. 9.

I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets.

THAT the ſaints do not remain inſenſible, while their bodies are in the duſt, but become angels,* ſee and ſerve God and bear his meſſages, and miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation, hath been argued from ſeveral conſiderations, in the preceding diſcourſe; but we chiefly depend on revelation. The text and ſeveral other ſcriptures, we

* THE term angel ſignifies a meſſenger. If glorified ſaints are uſed to bear God's meſſages, or ſent to do his buſineſs, they are made angels, in the proper ſenſe of the word. Such appear to have been the angelic band, who united in praiſing God, when the Lamb prevailed to open the book of his decrees and reveal them to the apoſtle—"And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy—for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and haſt made us unto our God, kings and prieſts: *And we ſhall reign on the earth.*"* Surely theſe muſt have been of our race.

* REVELATION v. 9, 10.

conceive to be to our purpoſe, and ſufficient to eſtabliſh our theory, and that the ſame is illuſtrated and confirmed by ſacred hiſtory, both of the Old and New Teſtament. One inſtance of a departed ſaint, ſent as a meſſenger from heaven to earth, hath been adduced from the Old Teſtament: We now advert to the New.

HERE our proof is explicit. We can conceive of no evaſion. Two of our race *who had long before been removed from earth to heaven*, were certainly ſent to viſit the Savior, juſt before his ſufferings—Moſes and Elias, who attended him on the mount, whither he retired with three of his diſciples, and converſed with him in their preſence. St. Luke hath deſcribed their appearance, and told the ſubject of their converſation—"Who appeared, in glory and ſpake of his deceaſe, which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem."*

MOSES had then been dead more than fourteen centuries. Elias had not taſted death, but he had been changed. That change had paſſed upon him which will paſs on the ſaints who ſhall be alive at Chriſt's coming. The change muſt have been great, or he could not have aſcended to heaven in a chariot of fire, or lived above the region of air which ſurrounds this globe.

THESE two ſaints, ſeem, on this occaſion, to have been aſſimilated to each other—"They both appeared in glory"—were company for each other, and ſent together to teſtify for Chriſt, before choſen witneſſes. Our Savior's reſurrection was

* Luke ix. 29.

alſo attended by witneſſes who had been for ſome time in the world of ſpirits—"And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the ſaints which ſlept aroſe, and came out of the graves after his reſurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."*

BUT it is only departed ſaints who are employed to bear God's meſſages. There is no intimation in ſcripture, that thoſe who die in their ſins, are afterwards ſent, or ſuffered to go abroad. There is reaſon to believe, that as the ſaints are made perfect at death, ſo all that bears an affinity to goodneſs, ceaſes at that period, in the unrenewed, and that they put on the complete image of him who is termed their father. If this is the caſe, they would ſpread miſchief and miſery, were they permitted acceſs to thoſe who remain in the body, and liable to temptation. However this might be, we are aſſured that they are confined in the infernal priſon, and will continue priſoners till the great day.

THIS is intimated by our Savior, when he warns the ſinner to "agree with his adverſary quickly, while in the way with him—leſt he ſhould be caſt into priſon"—becauſe ſhould this happen there will be no releaſe "till he ſhall pay the utmoſt farthing." This ſpeaks the ſtate of impenitents, to be from the time of their death, that of priſoners, who can neither break their priſon, or obtain, ſo much as a temporary releaſe, till they ſhall have ſuffered all their demerits.

* Matthew xxvii. 52, 53.

THE ſame is intimated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich ſinner is repreſented as paſſing, at death, into a place of torment, and confinement, and as deſpairing of even a momentary enlargement. Otherwiſe he would not have requeſted that Lazarus might be ſent to warn his brethren who were then living on earth, but rather that he might have gone himſelf. Him they would have known; and he could have given them a feeling deſcription of the miſeries which living in pleaſure, regardleſs of the one thing needful, will draw after it. Many advantages might have been expected from his perſonal appearance to his brethren, but he preferred no ſuch petition.

HIS prayer that Lazarus might be ſent, was probably intended to intimate that departed ſpirits remember their former ſtate on earth, and the relatives and acquaintance whom they leave upon it; that they retain a concern for them; that they know that good ſpirits are uſed of God to tranſact matters relative to their ſpiritual concerns, and that thoſe who die in their ſins are kept in confinement, and not permitted to go forth; no, not to warn fellowſinners, whom they have left behind them.

THIS agrees with what is ſaid by St. Peter, reſpecting the antediluvians. He ſpeaks of thoſe as being "ſpirits in priſon" in the apoſtolic age, "who were diſobedient, when the long ſuffering of God waited with them in the days of Noah."

IT farther appears that their impriſonment is a ſtate of darkneſs. "Caſt ye the unprofitable ſer-

vant into outer darkneſs—to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs forever." This darkneſs is probably a contraſt to the light enjoyed by glorified ſaints. They are doubtleſs let into the purpoſes of heaven—to them the myſtery of divine providence is opened. They ſee and admire the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in thoſe diſpenſations, which while here, filled them with wonder. But it ſeems that the wicked are not let into theſe things, but driven away in darkneſs, and left enveloped in it—"None of the wicked ſhall underſtand, but the wiſe ſhall underſtand."

THIS may ſerve to explain a paſſage in Job, which might ſeem oppoſed to our conſtruction of the text—"His ſons come to honor and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them."* If we underſtand this of the wicked, it will harmonize with the other ſcriptures which have been adduced. Though ſome underſtand the words of Job, as deſcriptive of a man's ſtate at the approach of death, at which period he is often loſt and bewildered, and conſequently unaffected with any thing which may happen to his deareſt connexions, for whom, in health, and while poſſeſſed of reaſon, he felt greatly intereſted. This conſtruction is favored by the words which follow, in which he is repreſented as ſtill pained in body, as well as mind—"But his fleſh upon him ſhall have pain, and his ſoul within him ſhall mourn."†

* Job xiv. 21. † Vid. Henry in locum

REFLECTIONS.

IF we do not miſtake the ſcriptures, our pious departed friends may ſometimes attend us, and witneſs the manner in which we act our parts.

NATURAL relations terminate with life; but we do not believe that the friendſhips here contracted ceaſe at death; that the remembrance of the kind offices done to a good man here is then obliterated; that thoſe who had been helpers of one another in this life are forever loſt to each other when they ceaſe to be together here; or that the endearments of friendſhip and reciprocal affection are then extinguiſhed to revive no more.

DEPARTED ſpirits muſt retain a remembrance of what they did here, and of thoſe who acted with them. They cannot otherwiſe give account of themſelves; or witneſs the divine juſtice and impartiality relative to matters which had been common to themſelves and others. But theſe will be made manifeſt. All in heaven and on earth will ſee and confeſs the perfect rectitude of the divine adminiſtration.

SOME ſuppoſe that the knowledge of things done on earth, and regard for mortals would render departed ſaints unhappy; that therefore they are incredible.

BUT is not God grieved at the obſtinacy of ſinners? "When God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth—it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."* Was he then unhappy?

* Geneſis vi. 5.

Departed ſaints may have ſimilar ſenſations, whatever may be implied in them. The ſame objections may be made to the divine knowledge of mankind, as to that of the ſaints—We do not take it on us to explain either. The ſame may alſo be objected to ſuppoſing that the ſaints will be made acquainted with the deciſions of the Judge at the great day—that they will then ſee any who were dear to them here, ſent away with the workers of iniquity.

IF the manifeſt rectitude, and moral neceſſity of the divine deciſions, will then ſatisfy the righteous, and their greater love to God reconcile them to the execution of his judgments on all the impenitent, why not as ſoon as they ſhall have put off the remains of depravity, and become "the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect?"

THOSE in glory are doubtleſs acquainted with the moral ſtate of the world—"There is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth."*

THAT the powers of light and darkneſs take part in the concerns of mankind, and intereſt themſelves in their affairs, and that they conflict with each other on their account, they are taught in revelation.†

OUR departed friends who have known and loved us here, may be among the inviſible witneſſes of our conduct, and among our inviſible helpers. They may rejoice, if we act well our parts, or weep if we are numbered among ſinners, or careleſs neglecters of the grace of life.

* Luke xv. 7—10 † Daniel x. 13. Jude 9.

PERHAPS the pious parent who hath died in the Lord, may regard the little orphan which he hath left behind. Experienced in the troubles and difficulties, ſnares and temptations of this life, he may watch over it, and in ways to us unknown, "do it good and not evil all the days of its life." Little ones are not deſtitute of inviſible keepers—"*Their angels* do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

SOME are early called out of life; make but a tranſient viſit to this ſcene of ſorrow, and juſt taſte the bitter cup of affliction. But though ſhort their ſtay, they may yet begin to form ſome dear connexions—connexions which might perhaps, have been enſnaring; for more ſet bad than good examples before the little ſtrangers committed to their care. Theſe, taken from the evils to come, may be friends to thoſe who had appeared to befriend their helpleſs ſtate in this ſtrange land—may watch for their good, and rejoice if they ſee them minding the things which belong to their peace, and by a wiſe improvement of more talents than had been committed to themſelves, preparing for greater joys and honors in the kingdom of God.

THOSE who had ſuſtained a ſtill nearer relation—who had been "one fleſh," may bear like regard to thoſe "with whom they had taken ſweet counſel and walked to the houſe of God in company"—and may be the firſt to welcome their arrival at the world of joy.

* Matthew xviii. 10.

The Romiſh church have abuſed the doctrine which we conceive to be contained in the text, by decreeing adoration to departed ſaints. Others have gone into the oppoſite extreme, denying that they know ought of terreſtial matters, or have any concern in them. Adoration belongs exclaſively to God. It belongs neither to glorified ſaints, nor to angels of light, though the latter "are all ſent forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation." * "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him *only* ſhalt thou ſerve.

The righteous are not ſuffered to continue here by reaſon of death. Their removal is one of our ſevereſt trials. Our ſubject miniſters ſupport and comfort under it. When we reflect upon it, we ſeem to hear them calling to us from behind the ſcene, with "Weep not for us—we are not dead. Our bodies ſleep, but our ſpirits wake—Death is not the period of our exiſtence. It is only our removal—our birth day into the world of glory.—We are joined "to the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect"—enjoy the ſociety and that of the angels of God—behold the face of our heavenly Father, and of the divine Redeemer. We rejoice to ſee you "followers of thoſe who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes"—are ready to help you in your work, and to ſhout God's praiſes, and unite in ſongs of triumph, ſhould you come off conquerors, and riſe from your humble ſtate of ſorrows, ſufferings and temptations, to be our companions in glory."

* Hebrews i. 14.

THESE are consoling and animating views. They tend to excite a divine ambition in working out our salvation.

We are yet doomed "to bear the heat and burden of the day." But we are not alone---not unobserved. God, angels, and the good, who were lately "our companions in tribulation," witness the part we act. We would not dishonour ourselves in their view, and sink ourselves in their estimation. If they are ready to help our infirmity, we would not render their heavenly aid of no avail, or cut ourselves off from enjoying their society.

CONSIDER some dear departed child of God thus interested in your concerns, and you will find it a spur to duty, and an incentive to labor and not faint in the work assigned you, preparatory to your joining the church of the first born above. Think now that the godly ones who loved you here, and labored to animate you in the service of God--or those who lately looked to you for counsel and guidance, having made their way to glory, are waiting your arrival, and longing to hail your entrance into the kingdom, and by all the strength of your love to them, now freed from the imperfections of their earthly residence, and made glorious and heavenly, you will find yonrself drawn on toward that state of blessedness, in which you hope again to rejoice with those whose distresses you witnessed here--yea whose dying agonies, may have chilled your frame and filled you with anguish unutterable!

To meet them again, and find yourſelf and them, forever removed from the fear of evil, either natural or moral--forever ſecure the divine friendſhip--forever happy and glorious in the enjoyment of God, "the former things being all paſſed away, and all tears forever wiped from your eyes!" There to recount with thoſe bleſſed ſpirits, the travels and trials of this life, and look back, perhaps, on many hairbreadth eſcapes from eternal death! There, to dwell on the wonders of divine love and mercy exerciſed towards you, and often in things which you once thought to be againſt you! Who would not willingly ſuffer many deaths to enjoy theſe things?

Such conſiderations are animating in duty, and ſupporting in times of trial. If realized, we ſhall adopt the language of the ſuffering apoſtle—"None of theſe things move me, neither do I count my life dear to myſelf, that I may finiſh my courſe with joy"—and ſhare ſuch bleſſed ſociety—ſuch inconceivable felicity and glory in my Father's houſe above, in which are many manſions.

SERMON XXVIII.

The Danger of Deviating from Divine Inſtitutions.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt.

ST. PAUL was the apoſtle of the GENTILES. The care of the churches gathered among them devolved particulary on him. At the writing of this epiſtle he had no perſonal acquaintance with the church to which it is addreſſed.* Epaphras, a biſhop of the Coloſſians, then his fellow priſoner at Rome, had made him acquainted with their ſtate, and the danger they were in from falſe teachers, who during the abſence of their miniſter, labored to turn them from the ſimplicity of the goſpel; and this letter was written, through divine influence, to guard them againſt thoſe deceivers, and perſuade them to abide in Chriſt.

Verſe 1.

To this end he counſelled them to keep to the divine directions, carefully avoiding every alteration, or addition, which might be urged upon them by uninſpired men, though they might come with a ſhew of wiſdom and humility, and profeſſion of regard to the honor of God and happineſs of man.

MANY of the moſt ſucceſsful attacks on God's earthly kingdom have been made in this way. Open rebellion againſt God, is found chiefly on thoſe who have no faith in him; who are therefore devoid of his fear. Others are tempted moſtly to other ſins, and induced to make indirect oppoſition to the divine government, from them, the tempter hides the truth, and leads them into error, and thus cauſes them to pull down the cauſe which they aim to build up, and fight againſt God with a view to ſerve him.

So much of God appears in his works, that comparatively few can be made to doubt his exiſtence, or his providential government. Hence few are prevailed with to renounce his fear and riſe directly againſt him; but many are deceived, and conſequently engaged to act with his enemies.

HERE a common ſource of ſeduction hath been ſuggeſting improvements on divine inſtitutions—that *this* and *that*, which God hath not ordered would help his cauſe and promote his intereſt.—Sometimes the improvements are attempted under pretence of divine order, and urged with his authority; but this veil is not always ſpread over endeavors to change his inſtitutes. They are often

urged as means adapted to help his cauſe, without pretence to divine order requiring the uſe of them. Much, it is alledged, is leſs to human diſcretion. This taken for granted, the reſt is eaſy. It is only to ſay *theſe* meaſures are wiſe and good, calculated to help on the canſe God, and whoever denies it, is conſidered as fighting againſt God.

THUS men are led away from the divine inſtitutions to thoſe of human invention. Human wiſdom is exalted above divine; and all with a view to glorify God!

THUS was the tempter laboring, through the inſtrumentality of his agents, to ſeduce the Coloſſians, when this epiſtle was written, and it is chiefly intended to counteract their influence, and prevent that church from being moved away from the hope of the goſpel, which they had received.

IN diſcuſſing the ſubject, We ſhall firſt, *glance at the meaſures uſed by thoſe deceivers*—then conſider *the ſucceſs which hath attended this mode of fighting againſt God, and ſeducing mankind*, adding a few obſervations on *the influence of tradition and the rudiments and cuſtoms of the world.*

THE Coloſſian ſeduces appear to have been of two kinds—Jewiſh and Gentile. The former ſeem not to have differed from thoſe at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, and thoſe in Judea. They were Jewiſh Chriſtians, who were ſo attached to the Moſaic ritual, that they wiſhed to continue it, and graft Chriſtianity upon it, rendering the religion of Chriſt only an appendage to that of Moſes. They inſiſted that the ceremonial law remained in

force—inſiſted eſpecially on the obſervance of circumciſion; and probably on the traditions ſo highly valued by the Phariſees. But the apoſtle aſſured this Gentile Church, that they were complete "in Chriſt," and needed nothing of this kind to recommend them to God, or to ſecure his favor—that "Chriſt had blotted out the hand writing of ordinances, and taken it away, nailing it to his croſs"—that the ceremonial law, being only "a ſhadow of good things to come," was fulfilled in Chriſt, and no longer obligatory; and warned them to ſtand faſt in their Chriſtian liberty, and ſuffer no man to judge them reſpecting ſuch things, or impoſe ſuch burdens upon them.

THE Gentile ſeducers were converts from Paganiſm, and no leſs eager to introduce the tenets and rites of their ſuperſtition. One of the errors, which, from the particular mention made of it, they ſeem to have urged, was the worſhipping of angels. "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen, vainly puffed up by his fleſhly mind."*

MANKIND ſeem, at a pretty early period, generally to have given into the idea of ſo vaſt a diſtance between God and man, that man is unworthy to come into his preſence, and can approach him acceptably only through a mediator. But juſt views of a mediator were never communicated to the ſcattered branches of our race, or ſoon loſt

* Verſe 18.

from among them. Moſt of the heathens offered religious homage to departed heroes; or to thoſe who had been revered while inhabitants of earth. To them were their prayers addreſſed, that they might bear them to the God of nature, and by their influence render him propitious.

HERE was the appearance of humility—So ſenſible of their unworthineſs that they dared not approach God in their own names, or preſent their own petitions—others who had ceaſed to ſin, and been admitted to the divine preſence, muſt intercede for them. But this was "a voluntary humility"—not ordered of God—a mere matter of human invention.

A MEDIATOR is indeed neceſſary for man ſince the fall; but man is not left to chooſe his mediator. One every way ſuitable is provided, through whom we may have acceſs to God. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus."

THE apoſtle further obſerves, that thoſe who directed them to worſhip angels, arrogated a knowledge of matters not revealed. God hath given no intimation of ſuch uſe to be made of angels, but ordered man to approach him in the name of Chriſt. Thoſe who go to God in other ways, or depending on other interceſſors, are ſaid "not to hold the head."* "The head of every man is Chriſt.† Such people will loſe their reward. "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of angels"—

* Verſe 19. † 1 Corinthians xi, 3.

The rewards of grace are promised to obedience; but not to "wilful worship, or voluntary humility." The utmost these can hope is forgiveness.

WHEN Paul assured the Colossians that they were "complete in Christ," he had reference to the errors of all the deceivers who were laboring to seduce them. Gentile philosophy is as useless to the Christian, as Jewish rites. Christ hath the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him. We have only to rely on divine mercy, through faith in him, and we shall not be ashamed.

SUCH we conceive to be the sum of the instructions and warnings here given to the Colossians. They were only to keep to the divine directions, and seek salvation agreeably thereto, regardless of *the traditions of men and rudiments of the world.*

ALL error is deviation from divine rule. To this men are tempted with a view to honor God. This is a fruitful source of error. And when error is once generated, it is often diffused and perpetuated by tradition, custom, and *the rudiments of the world.*

WE proceed to consider *the success which hath attended this mode of fighting against God—that is, suggesting improvements on divine institutions and appointments.*

THE first attempt to seduce our race seems to have been of this kind. "The woman being deceived was in the transgression." Made upright, she could not have been persuaded to disobey God, unless she was led to believe that she might, some how, honor God in consequence of that disobedi-

ence. But how?—"In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes ſhall be opened; and ye ſhall be as gods, knowing good and evil"—Then ſhe could honor God better than while deſtitute of knowledge which would liken her to ſuperior intelligencies. "And when the woman ſaw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the eyes, and *a tree to be deſired to make one wiſe*, ſhe took of the fruit thereof and did eat." Thus ſome ſuppoſe the tempter to have prevailed againſt her.

IT may be thought ſtrange that ſhe ſhould expect good to riſe out of evil. Her deſcendants have often entertained ſuch expectations; but they are depraved, and their minds are darkened.

WHETHER this was the ſophiſm by which Satan's victory was obtained, we preſume not to determine. It is however certain that he prevailed by deception; by perſuading our common mother that advantage would accrue from ceaſing to follow the divine directions.

CAIN, her eldeſt ſon, fell into a ſin of the ſame kind; was induced to change divine inſtitutions. "Cain brought the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord," inſtead of the firſtlings of the flock. The fruit of the ground did not typify the ſacrifice of Chriſt, and had not been ordered of God. It was a mode of honoring him of Cain's deviſing. He thought to improve on divine appointments; or dared to change them to ſuit his circumſtances. "Cain was a tiller of the ground." The fruits of the ground were the product of his own labors—"Of ſuch as he had, he would bring

his offering. What advantage would accrue from changing with his brother to procure what God had required? God needed nothing and could receive nothing from his creatures."

ABEL believed himſelf under obligation to conform to the divine order, and in that way to ſeek the divine favor. Cain had not this faith. He was confident that another way would do as well; and followed the dictates of his own fancied wiſdom.* Therefore their different reception. Had Cain been equally obedient with Abel no difference would have been made. Cain is appealed to, to judge of this matter for himſelf—"If thou doſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted?"

TO *do well*, is to regulate principle and practice by the divine order; in both theſe Cain was deficient. They are commonly united. Error in principle occaſions error in practice.

NOT many ages after the deluge idolatry was introduced into the world, and corrupted and ſpoiled the worſhip of God. This ſeems to have been, at firſt, a deſign to improve on the homage which was paid to the true God.

ADORATION offered to other than God, is idolatry. This is of two kinds—that offered to angels, and departed ſpirits, and that offered to the heavenly

* Theſe are not mere conjectures—they are intimated by St. Jude, when he declares the ſchiſmatics of his day "have gone in the way of Cain and Core." Core, or Korah, certainly attempted to change a divine order by which the functions of the prieſthood were appropriated to the family of Aaron. And the ſchiſmatics, who were contemporary with the apoſtle, ſet themſelves up for teachers in the church without a regular, or ſupernal call to the miniſtry. *Theſe went in the way of Cain.* His ſin muſt therefore have been a departure from divine inſtitutions.

bodies and to images. The former is said to have been originally designed to engage those to whom it was addressed to act the part of mediators with God. The heavenly bodies were adored as the supposed residences of Deity. Image worship was intended to help devotion. It was thought that visible representations would serve to impress a reverence for the objects of worship on the mind, and solemnize the heart. With this view, images and paintings were introduced into temples and places of worship. They appeared to have effect. The worshippers seemed more devout. A happy discovery, which had not occurred to Omniscience!

To increase the good effects, further improvements were suggested. Images were made of the precious metals, and enriched with gems and costly attire, and art was exhausted to embellish them. They were also consecrated with magnificent and solemn rites. After consecration, the celestials to whom they dedicated, were supposed to descend and dwell in them, and thus to be present with their worshippers, to hear their prayers, witness their gratitude, and smell a sweet savor in their sacrifices. And as temples were built, and images consecrated chiefly to inferior deities, who were worshipped as mediators, the homage which was paid to them was suited to the conceptions which the worshippers entertained of the objects of their worship; and being mostly taken from among men, the offerings were adapted to the characters which they had respectively sustained while resi-

dent in the body. Hence the homage paid to Baal, Moloch, Mars, Bacchus, Venus and others. Thus every abomination was ſanctioned, and made an object of religion!

THE uſe of images was common among the Eaſterns at an early period, and communicated to the Hebrews, who were converſant with them, before their ſettlement in Canaan. In Egypt, or certainly in the wilderneſs it was found among them. They were particularly guilty of this ſin while Moſes was on the mount with God. And the uſe which they then made of images was the ſame which hath been mentioned. As ſoon as the golden calf was finiſhed, Aaron, who had entered into their views, made proclamation—"Tomorrow is the feaſt of the Lord—[of Jehovah."] Moſes, who had greatly helped them in the worſhip and ſervice of God, was gone, and the idol was intended to ſupply his place; to help their devotion, and excite them to honor the true God! "Up make us Gods—for this Moſes—we wot not what is become of him."

THE idolatrous worſhip of the Romaniſts in later ages is of the ſame kind. Their churches abound with rich images, and are adorned with exquiſite paintings; the likeneſs of Chriſt agonizing on the croſs, and other affecting repreſentations, deſigned to impreſs religious ſubjects on the heart and excite devotion. Such is the uſe which they profeſs to make of them. And they ſeem not devoid of effect. Proteſtants who have attended their worſhip, have obſerved greater appearances of fervor, and greater movings of the paſſions,

than are uſual in the religious aſſemblies of other denominations of Chriſtians. And their adoration of angels and departed ſaints, is only as of mediators and interceſſors, who may preſent their prayers, and obtain favor for them—the very idolatry of paganiſm.

IN theſe things there is a ſhew of wiſdom and humility—wiſdom to deviſe means to impreſs a ſenſe of religion, and humility to draw nigh to God by the intervention of thoſe more worthy than themſelves; and the means ſeem not deſtitute of influence; they produce warm zeal, and all the fervor of devotion; yea, all thoſe feelings and emotions which are thought by ſome to conſtitute the eſſence of religion.

AND why is not all this right? Why are not theſe ways of honoring God and exciting devotion commendable, when they render the worſhipper thus fervent in ſpirit to ſerve the Lord?

THE reaſon is obvious—they are not required—yea, they are forbidden of the divine Sovereign. "Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him *only* ſhalt thou ſerve. Thou ſhalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeneſs of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth—I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."—

PRETENDING to honor God by direct diſobedience is peculiarly affrontive. Such worſhippers "provoke him to his face. Their offerings his ſoul hateth. They are a ſmoke in his noſe, and a fire that burneth all the day." Every thing of

this nature, whatever may be its deſign, is rebellion againſt God. Againſt no other ſin hath he manifeſted greater indignation.

No inſtance can be adduced of ſuch homage being accepted, or of good reſulting from ſuch worſhip. Yea, it hath commonly been followed with the ſevereſt marks of the divine reſentment. Witneſs the evils which came upon Iſrael when they made the golden calf, to help their devotions. Witneſs thoſe which fell on the family and kingdom of Jeroboam, when he forſook the appointed worſhip of God, and the miniſtry of the Levites whom God had appointed to wait at the altar. Jeroboam did not introduce the worſhip of Baal, or the other heathen gods. This was done afterwards by the influence of Jezebel. He only appointed other places of worſhip, beſide that which God had choſen, and conſecrated others to miniſter who had not the attachments of the Levites to the houſe of David and city of Zion, and made images to help the devotion of his people; and lo! his family periſh; a brand of infamy is ſet on his name; and becauſe his people walk in his ways, they are finally "broken and ceaſe to be a people!"

THE divine reſentment of attempts to change the ordinances of God, or make innovations in his worſhip even where they ſeem *to have been done out of concern for his honor*, is left on record in his word. Saul once offered ſacrifice. The neceſſity of his affairs ſeemed to require it. He profeſſed to have done it with reluctance, but to have thought it his duty—"I ſaid the Philiſtines will

come down upon me, and I have not made ſupplication unto the Lord: I forced myſelf therefore, and offered a burnt offering." But Saul was not of the family of Aaron, to whom the right of ſacrificing ſolely appertained by divine appointment. Hence inſtead of conciliating the divine favor, his officious zeal offended heaven—for that act of diſobedience he was threatened with depoſition; and a repetition of attempting to improve on divine orders, in ſparing the beſt cattle of Amelek to ſacrifice unto the Lord, confirmed the ſentence,* placed another on the throne, and led to the ruin of the rebellious prince. Uzzah only put forth his hand to ſteady the trembling ark, and was ſtruck dead for his raſhneſs, beſide the ark of God.†

SOME *ſpoiled through philoſophy and vain deceit*, have made changes in the divine inſtitutions, and attempted improvements upon them, ſince the commencement of the goſpel day. This hath been a leading trait of character in the chiefs of the Romiſh church. Many of the heads of that communion have ſignalized themſelves in this way. And ſome of their alterations have operated to impreſs what was thought to be religion, as hath been obſerved.

ANOTHER way in which they have manifeſted the ſame diſpoſition hath been the multiplying of holydays. Under various pretences, nearly half the days in the year have been conſecrated to religion, by order of thoſe gods on earth. Some real, and many fictitious ſaints, have days conſecrated to their memory.

* 1 Samuel xiii. 12—14.—xv. 15—23. † 2 Samuel vi. 6, 7.

HERE is a great ſhew of wiſdom, and zeal for God, and his cauſe in the world; calling men ſo often from their temporal concerns to attend to the duties of religion! Who can do other than approve it? Doubtleſs many have been deceived by appearances, and conſidered thoſe as wiſe and good who have done theſe things. But this is far from being their character. Theſe have been the doings of "Antichriſt, the Man of ſin—the Son of perdition! Becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God, on the children of diſobedience!" All theſe ſpecious meaſures are no better than Saul's ſacrificing, Uzzah's ſteadying the ark, and the uſe of images in divine worſhip! They are oppoſition to the orders of the Moſt High, and rebellion againſt him.

"SIX days ſhalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the ſeventh day is the ſabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou ſhalt not do any work"—Whoever takes it on himſelf to alter this appointment, "thinks to change times and laws;" which was foretold of him who ſhould "ſpeak great words againſt the Moſt High."*

THE Lord's day, is the only day which God hath ſanctified under the goſpel diſpenſation. This infinite wiſdom judged ſufficient. Had more been requiſite, more would have been conſecrated by divine order. But not a hint of any other holyday is to be found in the New Teſtament.†

* Daniel vii. 25.

† Neither the day of Chriſt's birth, death, reſurrection or aſcenſion appear to have been regarded as holy time, or any way diſtinguiſhed from the other days of the year, during the apoſtolic age. The former of theſe is

OCCASIONAL calls there may be to faſting and thankſgiving; and we have ſcripture warrant for attending them in their ſeaſons. But fixing on certain days of the year, or month, *ſtatedly* to call men from their ſecular buſineſs to attend to religion, and requiring the conſecration of them to religion is adding to the book of God. However well intended, it goes on miſtaken principles, and however ſpecious in appearance, is affronting the wiſdom and authority of heaven.

MOST of the errors referred to above, are found among Pagans or Catholics; but is nothing of the ſame kind chargeable on Proteſtants? "Are there not with us ſins againſt the Lord our God?" And of the ſame nature with thoſe we have been contemplating? The knowledge of other's errors may be for our warning; but the knowledge of our own is requiſite to our reformation. Where then are we directed of God, religiouſly to obſerve Chriſtmas, Lent, or Eaſter? Where to attend the euchariſt only twice or thrice a year; and never without

not marked in the ſcriptures. Whether it happened on the twentyfifth of December, or at ſome other ſeaſon is uncertain. So are the times in which the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians ſuffered martyrdom. Theſe events are veiled. Divine providence hath hidden them from mankind, probably for the ſame reaſon that the body of Moſes was hidden from Iſrael—to prevent its being made an object of idolatrous worſhip—or for the ſame which is ſuppoſed to have occaſioned our Lord's ſeeming neglect of his mother, and his ſeverer reproof given to Peter, than to any other of his diſciples—"Get thee behind me Satan;" namely, that idolatrous honor, which he foreſaw would be afterwards paid them by ſome called Chriſtians.

Eaſter is once mentioned in our tranſlation of the New Teſtament; but it is not found in the Greek original. The word there uſed is πασχα, the Paſſover. It is mentioned only to note the time in which Herod intended to have brought forth Peter and delivered him up to his enemies.†

† ACTS xii. 4.

one, or more preparatory lectures ?* Where to add a third prayer at the adminiſtration of that ordinance, when our divine pattern only bleſſed the bread before he diſtributed it to his diſciples, and gave thanks to the Father, before he divided to them the cup ? Where are we directed to attend quarterly ſeaſons of prayer, or to hold weekly conferences for religious purpoſes ?

* We would not be underſtood to intend that all religious meetings on week days are unlawful. Special occaſions often require them. But the Lord's day is the only time ſet apart by divine order for *ſtated* attendance. No other hath he conſecrated to the buſineſs of religion. Neither would we be conſidered as denying the legality of ever uniting to ſeek the Lord previous to the celebration of the eucharift. We may look to God to aſſiſt and accept us in every duty. But if we conſider theſe preparatory exerciſes as *indiſpenſibly requiſite, and as conſtituting a part of the duty*, we do it without divine warrant.

From an attention to the goſpel hiſtory, we are induced to believe that the celebration of that ordinance conſtituted a part of the common duties of every Lord's day, while the apoſtles miniſtered in the Chriſtian church ;† and that an attendance at the ſacramental table, was not diſtinguiſhed by any ſpecial preparatory exerciſes, diverſe from thoſe which anteceded other ſanctuary duties. No trace of diſtinction, in theſe reſpects, is to be found in ſcripture ; neither precept nor example can be adduced to ſupport it. Whence then its origin ?

Did not it derive from Rome ? We know the errors of the Romiſh church relative to the eucharift ; and their tendency to induce a belief that it is more holy, and requires greater ſanctity in communicants, than is requiſite to an attendance on other ordinances. And the ſame notion is prevalent with many who have withdrawn from the communion of that church. Many ſerious people who attend other religious duties with pleaſure and advantage, are afraid to obey Chriſt's dying command ! Is not this a relic of popery ? When Luther left the papal communion, his reformation, particularly relative to this ordinance, was but partial. Many other proteſtants retain a tinge of catholic leaven. Is not the diſtinction reſpecting the ſanctity of divine ordinances from this ſource ? It is not found in the goſpel. If the exerciſes under conſideration ſerve to perpetuate this unſcriptural diſtinction, and to drive men from a plain and important duty, they have a baleful effect.

They may be well intended. Doubtleſs they are ſo by the generality of thoſe who attend them. It is painful to be obliged to diſſent from men whom we receive as brethren, and revere as Chriſtians. But after much deliberation, ſuch are our views of the ſubject before us ; and we offer them to the ſerious conſideration of the followers of Chriſt.

† ACTS xx. 7.

BUT theſe are well intended. So probably was Uzzah's ſteadying the ark—But ſome of theſe do help on the cauſe of God, and even more than the ſtale attendance on Lord's day duties. So thought thoſe who introduced images and paintings into churches. [Some indeed attend thoſe who neglect Lord's day duties.]

HAVE we then diſcovered defects in the divine plan! And do we feel ourſelves capable of making emendations in it!—Of "teaching eternal wiſdom how to rule!"—How to effect its purpoſes of mercy!

BEWARE *leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Chriſt.* "Vain man would be wiſe—He naturally thinks himſelf qualified, even to ameliorate divine inſtitutions. Temptation to this ſin coincides with a natural bias in depraved humanity. Many and very miſchievous errors have iſſued from it. Would we eſcape the ſnare, we muſt liſten to the apoſtle ſpeaking in the text. The ſum of his advice is to keep to the divine directions, eſpecially in matters of religion. Theſe are contained and plainly taught in the holy Scriptures, which we have in our hands, and of the ſenſe of which we muſt judge for ourſelves; remembering that we are accountable to God the judge of all.

As ſome are *ſpoiled through philoſophy and vain deceit*, others are corrupted by regard to *the tradition of men and rudiments of the world.* This endangered the Coloſſians, and eventually ruined the

church at Rome. The leading errors of paganiſm were thereby introduced into that Chriſtian church, and rendered it completely antichriſtian. Errors which ſeemed to have been deſtroyed by Chriſtianity, were again revived, and the abominations which they had occaſioned, were acted over again with enlargements!

THE *traditions of men and rudiments of the world*, have ſtill their ſeducing influence. Moſt men ſwim down with the current of the times—adopt the ſentiments and conform to the uſages of thoſe with whom they live. The popular ſcheme of religion, they conſider as the orthodox ſcheme, and the religion of the land, the true religion. Therefore is one nation Papiſts, another Proteſtants, one Calviniſts, another Lutherans. Theſe differences of ſentiment do not ariſe from differences in the mental conſtitutions of nations, but from the accidental differences of ſituation.

FEW have ſufficient independence of mind to "judge of themſelves what is right." Many who "call Chriſt Lord, receive for doctrines the commandments of men." Therefore doth religion vary like the faſhions of the world. Was the faſhion of the world to be the rule of judgment, it might be wiſe to follow it: But "we muſt every one give an account of himſelf to God," and be judged by the rule which he hath given us. It becomes us therefore to "call no man maſter, becauſe one is our Maſter, even Chriſt." To him we are accountable. At our peril do we neglect obedience to his commands.

IT concerns us to do all things according to the pattern drawn out before us in the Scriptures. Againſt the natural bias to affect improvements on divine inſtitutions, and againſt the prevalence of faſhion and contagion of popular opinion, we ſhould be particularly on our guard. "For curſed is every one who confirmeth not all the words of God's law to do them, and all the people ſhall ſay, Amen."

SERMON XXIX.

The Sins of Communities Noted and Punished.

MATTHEW xxiii. 36.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

THIS is predicated of the judgments of God on thoſe who had ſhed the blood of his ſaints. The Savior declares that all the righteous blood which had been ſhed on the earth from that of Abel down to the goſpel day, ſhould come on that generation!

BUT is not this unreaſonable and contrary to the Scriptures? "Far be wickedneſs from God and iniquity from the Almighty. For the work of man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every man to find according to his ways—The righteouſneſs of the righteous ſhall be upon him, and the wickedneſs of the wicked ſhall be upon him." Such is the language of revelation.

AND is not that of reaſon the ſame? Will reaſon juſtify puniſhing ſome men for other men's

ſins? Thoſe who lived in the days of our Savior had no ſhare in the murder of Abel, or of many others who had died by wicked hands. Thoſe dire events had been accompliſhed before they had exiſtence. How then could they be anſwerable for them?

To ſolve this myſtery we muſt conſider man in a twofold view—as an individual and as the member of a community.

As individuals mankind are ſolely accountable for the parts which they act perſonally. In the judgment of the great day, they will only be judged for the uſe which they ſhall have made of the talents committed to them here—"We muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad."

BUT every individual is a member of the human race, and of ſome community. The race, as ſuch, and the larger branches of it, the nations and empires into which it is divided, are amenable to the Supreme Governor, and liable to puniſhment, if in their public characters, they rebel againſt him. And righteous individuals, may be involved in the judgments ſent to puniſh the ſins of the community to which they belong. They often are ſo. Perſonal rectitude is not deſignated by an exemption from national calamities. Diſcriminations will eventually be made in its favor, but not here. Here "all things come alike unto

all, and there is one event to the righteous and the wicked."

To *shew such to be the general rule of the divine administration in the government of the world, is the design of the following discourse:* Which will explain the text.

THE world, and the communities into which it is divided, have their probation no less than persons; and there are seasons in which God enters into judgment with them and adjusts retributions to their moral states.

IN discussing the subject, we shall treat, *first of families, then of larger communities, and of the world.*

THE first family of our race affords an example to our purpose. Before that family was increased by a single branch issuing from it, it rebelled against God, and God entered into judgment with it, and punished its sin upon it. And the punishment was not restricted to the offending pair, but extended to their race in common with themselves: All were doomed to sufferings and death *in consequence of their sin.* And the sentence hath been executing upon them from that period to the present time. Mankind have gone through life sorrowing; and "death hath reigned even over those, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Neither have discriminations been made in favor of the saints, but they have been involved in the general calamity, and groaned with the rest of the creation.

IN some respects this was an exempt case, but in the general diffusion of punishment on the various

branches of the family, it accords with the divine adminiſtration reſpecting other families, as appears from ſacred hiſtory, and from the general hiſtory of the human race. Countleſs examples might be adduced.

THE murder of Abel was not puniſhed ſolely on Cain, but alſo on his family. The ground curſed for *his* ſin, did not yield *to them* its ſtrength; and they were deprived of thoſe religious inſtructions which they would no doubt have received, had their father dwelt "in the preſence of the Lord," or remained in the family of Adam which contained the church of God. Many of the evils which fell on that ſinner, fell alſo on his children and reſted on them till the extinction of his race by the deluge.

SIMILAR were the conſequences which followed the ſins of Ham and Eſau: But theſe more properly rank under the head of communities: But inſtances of families which have ſuffered, yea periſhed, by judgments ſent to puniſh the ſins of their heads, often occur.

WHEN ſundry of the princes of Iſrael rebelled againſt God in the wilderneſs, and attempted a ſubverſion of the government which God had inſtituted for his people, they did not periſh alone, but their families periſhed with them, though no intimations are given that they were *all* partakers in their ſin—yea, though it is more than intimated that *ſome of them* were not capable of partaking in it—"They came out and ſtood in the doors of their tents, and their wives, and their ſons, and

their little ones. And as soon as Moses had warned the congregation, and foretold the manner of their death, "the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and *their houses*—and they and *all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished.**

To these might be added the families of Achan, Eli, Saul, Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab and others. No special personal guilt was found on many members of these families. They died to expiate family guilt. We know of none chargeable on Ahimelech, or the other priests who were slain by order of Saul. The sins of Eli and his house, were punished upon them, agreeably to the divine denunciation, first by a nameless prophet; afterwards by Samuel. In one of the sons of Jeroboam, "were found good things toward the Lord God of Israel:" Therefore was he removed by an early death, and the residue of the family were afterwards destroyed with the sword to punish the sin of the father, "who had sinned and made Israel to sin."

THE divine administration is still the same. In later ages instances might be adduced, especially among princes, of families extirpated (after a term of family probation, which had been abused by wickedness and dishonored by crimes) to punish family guilt. But these might be more liable to be disputed than those recorded in sacred history.

* Numbers xvi. 27—33.

Though we think it evident, from common obſervation, that the curſe of heaven uſually reſts on the deſcendants of thoſe who caſt off the fear of God and harden themſelves in ſin, and that God "viſits the iniquities of fathers on their children.

WE turn our attention next to larger communities. Here we find the divine adminiſtration regulated by the ſame rules.

MORALS are as neceſſary to larger communities as to families, or individuals, and alike required of them. And they are equally amenable to HIM who is over all, and receive like returns from his impartial hands, according to their works. The chief difference made between communities and perſons, reſpects the time and place, in which they are judged and rewarded: Reſpecting the former, they take place in this world; reſpecting the latter, in that to come. Perſons will live again after death. Communities, as ſuch, exiſt only here. Here therefore communities muſt be remunerated. They are ſo. God tries them, and proportions retributions to their moral ſtate. "Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation;" but wickedneſs degrades and deſtroys it. The ſtrength and happineſs of a people are proportioned to their morals, and increaſe and diminiſh with them.

PERHAPS it will be ſaid, Theſe are the natural conſequences of moral good and evil. They are ſo. And theſe conſequences are the effect of divine order; of the conſtitution which God hath eſtabliſhed. Hence the divine declaration by the prophet: "At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concern-

ing a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said, I would benefit them.*

THIS declaration is verified in the divine administration. God often bears with nations and communities, even to long suffering; but if they continue to revolt, he fails not to punish their sin upon them. When a community hath filled up the measure of its iniquity, judgment is executed upon it; not according to the moral character of those who then compose it, but according to its character considered as a nation which hath been tried God's appointed time.

WHILE a community is on trial its conduct is recorded; its acts of disobedience to the divine Sovereign are charged to the community, and when its probation ends, they are brought into the reckoning and punished upon it, unless repentance and reformation intervene and prevent it. That "the sin of the Amorites was not full," was assigned as a reason for deferring the settlement of Abram's race in the land of Canaan. God would not enter into judgment with them, till the measure of their guilt had reached a certain height;

* Jeremiah xviii. 7—10.

but the sins of every generation helped to swell the account, till they were ripe for ruin. The Hebrews were then ordered to destroy them utterly—"every thing that breathed." It was not the sins of only that generation which occasioned this sentence, but the sins of the nations. Many individuals who had no personal guilt were included in the sentence, and destroyed by its execution. The infants perished with the adults. The divine judgments executed on other wicked communities have been similar. Sodom, and her daughters were each of them a petty kingdom; and when they had severally filled up the measure of their crimes, they all perished together, old and young.

IF more examples are desired, look to the seed of Jacob. That people had a long probation; but when they had filled up the measure of national guilt, their sins were brought to remembrance and punished upon them. The ten tribes revolted from God, when they left the house of David and set Jeroboam on the throne. For more than two centuries and an half God waited with them, and warned them of the evils which their sins would bring upon them; but they repented not. When their iniquity was full, he gave their enemies power over them; "rooted them up out of the good land which he had given their fathers, and scattered them beyond the river."

THE kingdom of Judah remained about an hundred and thirty years after "Ephraim was broken that he was not a people." Those who adhered to the house of David did not revolt so early as

those who seceded at the division of the kingdom. Divine worship according to the law of Moses, was kept up among them; and several pious princes reigned over them. But though the progress of impiety was less rapid than in the other kingdom, there was a departure from the living God, and idolatry and immorality prevailed, till they also filled up the measure of their sins. Then impartial heaven "stretched over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab."*

THE generation on which those judgments were executed was greatly depraved, and like the men of Sodom, sinners exceedingly; but their sins alone would not have occasioned those desolations; they were added to the national account, and filled up the measure of national guilt. One of their kings did much to swell that account. Mention is made, more than once, of his sins, particularly of the innocent blood which he shed, as fixing the doom of the nation, rendering prayer for it unavailing and its ruin inevitable. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people: Cast them out of my sight; I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, *because of Manasseh, the king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.*"† Wantonly shedding the blood of his subjects, was one of the sins charged upon him. This sin is, in a sense, unpardonable. "Blood defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleans-

* 2 Kings xxi. 13. † Jeremiah xv. 1—4.

ed of the blood that is ſhed in it, but by the blood of him that ſhed it."* Manaſſeh's blood was not ſhed. Therefore was the land deſtined to ſuffer. Joſiah, who reigned after Manaſſeh, was pious; but after he had done every thing in his power to atone for the ſins of his fathers, and reclaim the nation, and not wholly without effect, it is expreſſly noted that "the Lord turned not from the fierceneſs of his wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled againſt Judah, *becauſe of all the provocations that Manaſſeh had provoked him withal.*" And after the judgments had been executed, it is again remarked that they were ſent to puniſh the ſins of that wicked ruler—"Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, *for the ſins of Manaſſeh, according to all that he did; and alſo for the innocent blood that he ſhed, for he filled Jeruſalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon.*"†

MANASSEH was gone off the ſtage; ſo were all who had ſhared in his guilt; that prince had, moreover, repented and obtained perſonal forgiveneſs; but his crimes had filled up the meaſure of national wickedneſs, and judgment muſt follow. There was no remedy.

THESE are concluſive evidence that the ſins of a people, and eſpecially of the rulers of a people, which are not puniſhed by the civil arm, are charged to the people, and eventually puniſhed upon them.

* Numbers xxxv. 33. † 2 Kings xxiii. 26. xxiv. 3, 4.

As there are seasons in which God judgeth nations and communities, and renders to them according to their works, there are also seasons in which he doth the same by the world. That this will be done at the end of the world, or at the judgment of the great day, is not matter of doubt with believers in revelation. But some other seasons of divine judgment are now more particularly intended. For there are seasons in which God's judgments are abroad in the earth—in which the sins of the world seem to be brought to remembrance, and punished on its inhabitants.

EMINENTLY such was the six hundreth year of the life of Noah. "When the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence," he entered into judgment, and punished the sin of the world, in the destruction of its inhabitants. God did not "do his work, his strange work, or bring to pass his act, his strange act," as soon as "the wickedness of man was great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually." He waited long. But when the vast term allowed to antediluvian sinners was expired, he swept off a race who had been disobedient while long suffering mercy waited with them.

THE sin of the world was then full. Human guilt had long been augmenting, and at length occasioned that awful display of divine justice. Many who were at that time destroyed were, no doubt great and old offenders; but many others differed from them, were but entering on life, not capable, of personal guilt, yet they were involved in the

general calamity. Thoſe of every character periſhed together. "The flood came and took them all away."

There hath been no other ſeaſon in which the divine judgments toward the whole world have been ſo ſignally manifeſt as at the deluge. There have however, been times in which they have been very general and very ſevere. One of thoſe times was at hand in our Savior's day. On the generation which lived when he ſuffered for the ſins of men, were ſome of the vials of divine wrath poured out, though not thoſe in which the wrath of God was filled up. Perhaps at no period yet paſt, that of the deluge excepted, hath God viſited the ſins of men with greater ſeverity. If the divine judgments fell then more particularly on the Jews, the other nations did not eſcape. If the Jews ſuffered more than others, there were reaſons; nor are they wholly concealed.

The Jews had enjoyed greater religious privileges than others—had more means of inſtruction in divine things, and had neglected and abuſed them, and ſeem to have more completely filled up the meaſure of their iniquity than any other people. "To whom much is given, of them is the more required; and thoſe who know their duty and yet do things worthy of ſtripes ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes."

God was alſo at that time avenging "the righteous blood which had been ſhed upon the earth"—the blood of his ſaints who had been martyred, of which more than a double portion was chargeable

on that people. They had of old killed the prophets, and persecuted those who had been sent of God to warn them from their ways. The same was still their governing temper, and to a greater degree than at any former period of their history.

THEY were also the church of God; and he was now entering into judgment with his church, as a community the measure of whose iniquity was full. This was nearly their situation when the Savior addressed them, as in our context—"Fill ye up the measure of your fathers."

THIS was not a command, but a prediction of what was then nearly accomplished; and he told them how it would be completed—by their killing and crucifying the messengers of heaven, at whose head was the divine messenger who then addressed them—that when they should have done these things, God would enter into judgment with them, and avenge on them "all the righteous blood which had been shed in his church from the foundation of the world." *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come on this generation.* And he assured them that it would desolate their country, and that it would remain destitute of those religious privileges which they then enjoyed, till they should become of another spirit—"Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

As soon as Christ was alone with his disciples, he gave them a description of those desolations, which is recorded in the following chapter, and is

ſo plain, and made ſuch an impreſſion on the Chriſtians of that day, who were moſtly Jews, that they fled at the approach of the Roman armies and eſcaped the calamities which overwhelmed their nation. Whoever reads the hiſtory of that age will be convinced of the truth of that prediction—"Then ſhall be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor ever ſhall be. "Thoſe were the days of vengeance, that all things which were written might be fulfilled."

ANOTHER of the ſeaſons of divine judgments occurred at the ſubverſion of the Roman empire by the Northern barbarians. That mighty empire comprehended a very large portion of the then known world. It had become exceedingly populous. Italy, in particular was chiefly covered with the dwellings of men, like one continued city; and almoſt the whole empire ſwarmed with inhabitants, and many parts were cultivated like a garden. But when thoſe ſavages broke into it, they carried fire and ſword wherever they went. Like the armies of God's judgments deſcribed by the prophet Joel, they carried terror and deſtruction—"A fire devoured before them, and behind them a flame burned: The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a deſolate wilderneſs; and nothing eſcaped them."* The moſt populous and fruitful parts of that vaſt empire were literally made deſolate, and became a wilderneſs; and many places have never recover-

* Joel ii. 3.

ed their former luſtre, and few become equally populous to this day.

WAVING the particular mention of other periods in which the judgments of God have been made manifeſt, would only obſerve, that we are taught by the prophets, to expect deſolating judgments before the beginning of the latter day glory, and that they will be very general—that the ſins, not of this, or that community, but of the world will come into remembrance before God; and that the full vials of his wrath will be poured out, not barely to avenge the ſins of that generation, but the ſins of the world, the meaſure of their iniquity being then full.

THE moſt terrifying metaphors are uſed to prefigure the judgments which will then be executed on mankind. The deſtruction of men is compared to the harveſt and vintage! But the language of prophecy, if we conſider the human race as the objects of the harveſt and vintage, admits no augmentation of terror. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one ſat, like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a ſharp ſickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice, to him that ſat on the cloud, Thruſt in thy ſickle and reap: For the time is come for thee to reap; for the harveſt of the earth is ripe. And he that ſat on the cloud thruſt in his ſickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he alſo having a ſharp ſickle. And another angel

came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the ſharp ſickle, ſaying, Thruſt in thy ſharp ſickle, and gather the cluſters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thruſt in his ſickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and caſt it into the great wine preſs of the wrath of God. And the wine preſs was trodden without the city; and blood came out of the wine preſs, even unto the horſes bridles, by the ſpace of a thouſand and ſix hundred furlongs."*

THE ſcenes here depicted are yet future. They are confirmed, and in ſome meaſure illuſtrated, by other prophecies; but as our underſtanding of prophecies muſt remain partial till explained by their accompliſhment, we leave the intelligent reader to his own reflections upon them.

INFERENCES.

I. THAT communities, both ſmall and great are on trial here, and that they are eventually called into judgment and rewarded and puniſhed according to their uſe, or abuſe of talents, is fairly deducible from the ſubject under conſideration. Such being the divine adminiſtration, we ſee the importance of national virtue. Morals are the health and ſtrength of a community: While they remain no enemy can prevail againſt it. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"—But when a community degenerates, and become corrupt and vicious,

* Revelation xiv. 14—20.

their guardian angel quits his charge, and their guardian God becomes the avenger of their crimes.

II. WE see also the importance of good government, and good rulers, who will execute righteous laws with fidelity, and in their own persons, set the example of obedience to them. The example of those in authority hath a commanding influence. Their principles and practices, draw many after them. We see this exemplified in the history of the Hebrews: When their great men were good men, virtue was respected, and the nation rejoiced; but "the wicked walked on every side, when the vilest men were exalted," and the degrading, and even desolating judgments of heaven followed. "These things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written for our admonition."*

III. THE character of individuals is not to be judged by their circumstances here. When judgments are abroad to punish national wickedness they do not always fall on the most guilty—they fall on the community.—All who belong to it are obnoxious. "Suppose ye that the Gallileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were sinners above all the Gallileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." All have sins sufficient to justify God in taking them away when, and how, he pleaseth.

WAS there not another life, impartiality would require a different divine administration. Discriminations would here be made according to the

* 1 Corinthians x. 11.

difference of moral characters. They are not made. The iniquity of fathers is visited on their children; the iniquity of communities on particular generations, and on individuals; and often on those who are not the most guilty! We see it in every part of the sketch which we have taken of the divine government.

THE doctrine of another life clears up this mystery. Without the belief of it we cannot "ascribe righteousness to our Maker;" but when we take it into the account every difficulty is removed. That there is another life, in which the perfect rectitude of divine providence will appear, is a dictate of reason, and the explicit language of revelation.

IV. WHEN the mystery of God is finished, and the veil now spread over the divine administration taken away, we shall see the wisdom, justice, and goodness of those parts of it, which now, seeing only in part, we contemplate with surprize and wonder.—"That all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from that of righteous Abel, to our Savior's day, should be required of that generation;" and that there should be seasons in which the sins of nations and of the world are avenged on particular generations, who are made to bear the sins of those who had gone before them, and on individuals, not distinguished by their crimes, will no more astonish and confound us!

WE now witness such things in the divine administration! We cannot but witness them. We shall then see the reasons of them, and be satis-

fied; we shall join in that angelic ascription, "Even so Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."* Till that decisive day, let us wait on the Lord, and in the way of well doing, trust in his mercy—"*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: To whom be glory forever.*"† AMEN.

* Revelation xvi. 7. † Romans xi. 36.

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